

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

FEBRUARY 1895.

THE SOWERS.

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CHAPTER IV.

DON QUIXOTE.

PAUL had been five months in England when he met Mrs. Sydney Bamborough. Since his hurried departure from Tver a winter had come and gone, leaving its mark as winters do. It left a very distinct mark on Russia. It was a famine winter. From the snow-ridden plains that lie to the north of Moscow, Karl Steinmetz had written piteous descriptions of an existence which seemed hardly worth the living. But each letter had terminated with a prayer, remarkably near to a command, that he, Paul Howard Alexis, should remain in England. So Paul stayed in London, where he indulged to the full a sadly mistaken hobby. This man had, as we have seen, that which is called a crank, or a loose screw, according to the fancy of the speaker. He had conceived the absurd idea of benefiting his fellow-beings, and of turning into that mistaken channel the surplus wealth that was his. This, moreover, if it please you, without so much as forming himself into a society.

This is an age of societies, and, far from concealing from the left hand the good which the right may be doing, we publish abroad our charities on all hands. We publish in a stout volume our names and donations. We even go so far as to cultivate an artificial charity by meat and drink and speeches withal. When we have eaten and drunk, the plate is handed round, and from the

fulness of our heart we give abundantly. We are cunning even in our well-doing. We do not pass round the plate until the decanters have led the way. And thus we degrade that quality of the human heart which is the best of all.

But Paul Howard Alexis had the good fortune to be rich out of England, and that roaring lion of modern days, organised charity, passed him by. He was thus left to evolve from his own mind a mistaken sense of his duty towards his neighbour. That there were thousands of well-meaning persons in black and other coats ready to prove to him that revenues gathered from Russia should be spent in the East End or the East Indies, goes without saying. There are always well-meaning persons amongst us ready to direct the charity of others. We have all met those virtuous persons who do good by proxy. But Paul had not. He had never come face to face with the charity broker—the man who stands between the needy and the giver, giving nothing himself, and living on his brokerage, sitting in a comfortable chair, with his feet on a Turkey carpet in his office on a main thoroughfare. Paul had met none of these, and the only organised charity of which he was cognisant was the great Russian Charity League, betrayed six months earlier to a Government which has ever turned its face against education and enlightenment. In this he had taken no active part, but he had given largely of his great wealth. That his name had figured on the list of families, sold for a vast sum of money to the authorities of the Ministry of the Interior, seemed all too sure. But he had had no intimation that he was looked upon with small favour. The more active members of the League had been less fortunate, and more than one nobleman had been banished to his estates.

Although the sum actually paid for the papers of the Charity League was known, the recipient of the blood money had never been discovered. It was a large sum, for the Government had been quick to recognise the necessity of nipping this movement in the bud. Education is a dangerous matter to deal with; England is beginning to find this out for herself. For on the heel of education socialism ever treads. When at last education makes a foothold in Russia, that foothold will be on the very step of the autocratic throne. The Charity League had, as Steinmetz put it, the primary object of preparing the peasant for education, and thereafter placing education within his reach. Such proceedings were naturally held by those in high places to be only second to Nihilism.

All this and more which shall transpire in the course of this narration was known to Paul. In face of the fact that his name was prominently before the Russian Ministry of the Interior, he proceeded all through the winter to ship road-making tools, agricultural implements, seeds, and food.

'The Prince,' said Steinmetz to those who were interested in the matter, 'is mad. He thinks that a Russian principality is to be worked on the same system as an English estate.'

He would laugh and shrug his shoulders, and then he would sit down and send a list of further requirements to Paul Howard Alexis, Esquire, in London.

Paul had met Mrs. Sydney Bamborough on one or two occasions, and had been interested in her. From the first he had come under the influence of her beauty. But she was then a married woman. He met her again towards the end of the terrible winter to which reference has been made, and found that a mere acquaintanceship had in the meantime developed into friendship. He could not have told when and where the great social barrier had been surmounted and left behind. He only knew in an indefinite way that some such change had taken place, as all such changes do, not in intercourse, but in the intervals of absence. It is a singular fact that we do not make our friends when they are near. The seed of friendship and love alike is soon sown, and the best is that which germinates in absence.

That friendship had rapidly developed into something else Paul became aware early in the season; and, as we have seen from his conversation, Mrs. Sydney Bamborough, innocent and guileless as she was, might with all modesty have divined the state of his feelings had she been less overshadowed by her widow's weeds.

She apparently had no such suspicion, for she asked Paul in all good faith to call the next day and tell her all about Russia — 'dear Russia.'

'My cousin Maggie,' she added, 'is staying with me. She is a dear girl. I am sure you will like her.'

Paul accepted with alacrity, but reserved to himself the option of hating Mrs. Sydney Bamborough's cousin Maggie, merely because that young lady existed and happened to be staying in Upper Brook Street.

At five o'clock the next afternoon he presented himself at the

house of mourning, and completely filled up its small entrance hall.

He was shown into the drawing-room, where he discovered Miss Margaret Delafield in the act of dragging her hat off in front of the mirror over the mantelpiece. He heard a suppressed exclamation of amused horror, and found himself shaking hands with Mrs. Sydney Bamborough.

The lady mentioned Paul's name and her cousin's relationship in that casual manner which constitutes an introduction in these degenerate days. Miss Delafield bowed, laughed, and moved towards the door. She left the room, and behind her an impression of breeziness and health, of English girlhood and a certain bright cheerfulness which acts as a filter in social muddy waters.

'It is very good of you to come—I was moping,' said Mrs. Sydney Bamborough. She was, as a matter of fact, resting before the work of the evening. This lady thoroughly understood the art of being beautiful.

Paul did not answer at once. He was looking at a large photograph which stood in a frame on the mantelpiece—the photograph of a handsome man of twenty-eight or thirty, small-featured, fair, and shifty-looking.

'Who is that?' he asked abruptly.

'Do you not know? My husband.'

Paul muttered an apology, but he did not turn away from the photograph.

'Oh, never mind,' said Mrs. Sydney Bamborough, in reply to his regret that he had stumbled on a painful subject. 'I never . . .'

She paused.

'No,' she went on, 'I won't say that.'

But so far as conveying what she meant was concerned, she might just as well have uttered the words.

'I do not want a sympathy which is unmerited,' she said gravely.

He turned and looked at her, sitting in a graceful attitude, the incarnation of a most refined and nineteenth century misfortune. She raised her eyes to his for a moment—a sort of photographic instantaneous shutter, exposing for the hundredth part of a second the sensitive plate of her heart. Then she suppressed a sigh—badly.

'I was married horribly young,' she said, 'before I knew what

I was doing. But even if I had known I do not suppose I should have had the strength of mind to resist my father and mother.'

'They forced you into it?'

'Yes,' said Mrs. Bamborough. And it is possible that a respectable and harmless pair of corpses turned in their respective coffins somewhere in the neighbourhood of Norwood.

'I hope there is a special hell reserved for parents who ruin their daughters' lives to suit their own ambition,' said Paul, with a sudden concentrated heat which rather startled his hearer.

This man was full of surprises for Etta Sydney Bamborough. It was like playing with fire—a form of amusement which will be popular as long as feminine curiosity shall last.

'You are rather shocking,' she said lightly. 'But it is all over now, so we need not dig up old grievances. Only I want you to understand that that photograph represents a part of my life which was only painful—nothing else.'

Paul, standing in front of her, looked down thoughtfully at the beautiful upturned face. His hands were clasped behind him, his firm mouth set sternly beneath the great fair moustache. In Russia the men have good eyes—blue, fierce, intelligent. Such eyes had the son of the Princess Alexis. There was something in Etta Bamborough that stirred up within him a quality which men are slowly losing—namely, chivalry. Steinmetz held that this man was Quixotic, and what Steinmetz said was usually worth some small attention. Whatever faults that poor knight of La Mancha who has been the laughing-stock of the world these many centuries—whatever faults or foolishness may have been his, he was at all events a gentleman.

Paul's instinct was to pity this woman for the past that had been hers—his desire was to help her and protect her, to watch over her and fight her battles for her. It was what is called Love. But there is no word in any spoken language that covers so wide a field. Every day and all day we call many things love which are not love. The real thing is as rare as genius, but we usually fail to recognise its rarity. We misuse the word, for we fail to draw the necessary distinctions. We fail to recognise the plain and simple truth that many of us are not able to love—just as there are many who are not able to play the piano or to sing. We raise up our voices and make a sound, but it is not singing. We marry and we give in marriage, but it is not loving. Love is like a colour—say, blue. There are a thousand shades of blue, and the

outer shades are at last not blue at all, but green or purple. So in love there are a thousand shades, and very, very few of them are worthy of the name.

That which Paul Howard Alexis felt at this time for Etta was merely the chivalrous instinct that teaches men their primary duty towards women—namely, to protect and respect them. - But out of this instinct grows the better thing—Love.

There are some women whose desire it is to be all things to all men instead of everything to one. This was the stumbling-block in the way of Etta Bamborough. It was her instinct to please all at any price, and her obedience to such instinct was often unconscious. She hardly knew perhaps that she was trading upon a sense of chivalry rare in these days, but had she known she could not have traded with a keener comprehension of the commerce.

‘I should like to forget the past altogether,’ she said. ‘But it is hard for women to get rid of the past. It is rather terrible to feel that one will be associated all one’s life with a person for whom no one had any respect. He was not honourable or . . .’

She paused; for the intuition of some women is marvellous. A slight change of countenance had told her that charity especially towards the dead is a commendable quality.

‘The world,’ she went on rather hurriedly, ‘never makes allowances—does it? He was easily led, I suppose. And people said things of him that were not true. Did you ever hear of him in Russia—of the things they said of him?’

She waited for the answer with suppressed eagerness—a good woman defending the memory of her dead husband—a fair lioness protecting her cub.

‘No. I never hear Russian gossip. I know no one in St. Petersburg, and few in Moscow.’

She gave a little sigh of relief.

‘Then perhaps poor Sydney’s delinquencies have been forgotten,’ she said. ‘In six months everything is forgotten now. He has only been dead six months, you know. He died in Russia.’

All the while she was watching his face. She had moved in a circle where everything is known—where men have faces of iron and nerves of steel to conceal what they know. She could hardly believe that Paul Alexis knew so little as he pretended.

‘So I heard a month ago,’ he said.

In a flash of thought Etta remembered that it was only within the last four weeks that this admirer had betrayed his admiration.

Could this be that phenomenon of the three-volume novel, an honourable man? She looked at him with curiosity—without, it is to be feared, much respect.

‘And now,’ she said cheerfully, ‘let us change the subject. I have inflicted enough of myself and my affairs upon you for one day. Tell me about yourself. Why were you in Russia last summer?’

‘I am half a Russian,’ he answered. ‘My mother was Russian, and I have estates there.’

Her surprise was a triumph of art.

‘Oh! You are not Prince Pavlo Alexis,’ she exclaimed.

‘Yes, I am.’

She rose and swept him a deep curtsy, to the full advantage of her beautiful figure.

‘My respects—mon prince,’ she said; and then, quick as lightning—for she had seen displeasure on his face—she broke into a merry laugh.

‘No—I won’t call you that; for I know you hate it. I have heard of your prejudices, and if it is of the slightest interest to you, I think I rather admire them.’

It is to be presumed that Mrs. Sydney Bamborough’s memory was short. For it was a matter of common knowledge in the diplomatic circles in which she moved that Mr. Paul Howard Alexis, of Piccadilly House, London, and Prince Pavlo Alexis, of the province of Tver, were one and the same man.

Having, however, fully established this fact from the evidence of her own ears, she conversed very pleasantly and innocently upon matters, Russian and English, until other visitors arrived and Paul withdrew.

CHAPTER V.

THE BARON.

AMONG the visitors whom Paul left behind him in the little drawing-room in Brook Street was the Baron Claude de Chauxville, Baron of Chauxville and Chauxville le Duc, in the Province of Seine-et-Marne, France, *attaché* to the French Embassy to the Court of St. James; before men a rising diplomatist, before God a scoundrel. This gentleman remained when the other visitors had left, and Miss Maggie Delafield, seeing his intention of pro-

longing a visit of which she had already had sufficient, made an inadequate excuse and left the room.

Miss Delafield being a healthy-minded young English person of that simplicity which is no simplicity at all, but merely simple-heartedness, had her own ideas of what a man should be, and M. de Chauville had the misfortune to fall short of those ideas. He was too epigrammatic for her, and beneath the brilliancy of his epigram she felt at times the presence of something dark and nauseous. Her mental attitude towards him was contemptuous and perfectly polite. With the reputation of possessing a dangerous fascination—one of those reputations which can only emanate from the man himself—M. de Chauville neither fascinated nor intimidated Miss Delafield. He therefore disliked her intensely. His vanity was colossal, and when a Frenchman is vain he is childishly so.

M. de Chauville watched the door close behind Miss Delafield with a queer smile. Then he turned suddenly on his heels and faced Mrs. Sydney Bamborough.

'Your cousin,' he said, 'is a typical Englishwoman—she only conceals her love.'

'For you?' inquired Mrs. Sydney Bamborough.

The Baron shrugged his shoulders.

'Possibly. One can never tell. She conceals it very well if it exists. However, I am indifferent. The virtue of the violet is its own reward, perhaps, for the rose always wins.'

He crossed the room towards Mrs. Sydney Bamborough, who was standing near the mantelpiece. Her left hand was hanging idly by her side. He took the white fingers and gallantly raised them to his lips, but before they had reached that fount of truth and wisdom she jerked her hand away.

M. de Chauville laughed—the quiet assured laugh of a man who has read in books that he who is bold enough can win any woman, and believes it. He was of those men who treat and speak of women as a class—creatures to be dealt with successfully according to generality and maxim. It is a singular thing, by the way, that men as a whole continue to disbelieve in a woman's negative—singular, that is, when one reflects that the majority of men have had at least one negative which has remained a negative, so far as they were concerned, all the woman's life.

'I am aware,' said M. de Chauville, 'that the rose has thorns. One reason why the violet is *hors de concours*.'

Etta smiled—almost relenting. She was never quite safe against her own vanity. Happy the woman who is, and rare.

‘I suspect that the violet is innocent of any desire to enter into competition,’ said Etta.

‘Knowing,’ suggested de Chauxville, ‘that although the race is not always to the swift, it is usually so. Please do not stand. It suggests that you are waiting for me to go or for some one else to come.’

‘Neither.’

‘Then prove it by taking this chair. Thus. Near the fire, for it is quite an English spring. A footstool. Is it permitted to admire your slippers—what there is of them? Now you look comfortable.’

He attended to her wants, divined them, and perhaps created them with a perfect grace and much too intimate a knowledge. As a carpet knight he was faultless. And Etta thought of Paul, who could do none of these things—or would do none of them—Paul, who never made her feel like a doll.

‘Will you not sit down?’ she said, indicating a chair, which he did not take. He selected one nearer to her.

‘I can think of nothing more desirable.’

‘Than what?’ she asked. Her vanity was like a hungry fish. It rose to everything.

‘A chair in this room.’

‘A modest desire,’ she said. ‘Is that really all you want in this world?’

‘No,’ he answered, looking at her.

She gave a little laugh and moved rather hurriedly.

‘I was going to suggest that you could have both at certain fixed periods—whenever . . . I am out.’

‘I am glad you did not suggest it.’

‘Why?’ she asked sharply.

‘Because I should have had to go into explanations. I did not say all.’

Mrs. Bamborough was looking into the fire, only half listening to him. There was something in the nature of a duel between these two. Each thought more of the next stroke than of the present parry.

‘Do you ever say all, M. de Chauxville?’ she asked.

The Baron laughed. Perhaps he was vain of the reputation that was his, for this man was held to be a finished diplomatist.

A finished diplomatist, be it known, is one who is a dangerous foe and an unreliable friend.

'Perhaps—now that I reflect upon it,' continued the clever woman, disliking the clever man's silence, 'the person who said all would be intolerable.'

'There are some things which go without it,' said de Chauxville.

'Ah?' looking lazily back at him over her shoulder.

'Yes.'

He was cautious, for he was fighting on a field which women may rightly claim for their own. He really loved Etta. He was trying to gauge the meaning of a little change in her tone towards him—a change so subtle that few men could have detected it. But Claude de Chauxville—accomplished steersman through the shoals of human nature, especially through those very pronounced shoals who call themselves women of the world—Claude de Chauxville knew the value of the slightest change of manner should that change manifest itself more than once.

The ring of indifference, or something dangerously near it, in Etta's voice had first been noticeable the previous evening, and the *attaché* knew it. It had been in her voice whenever she spoke to him then. It was there now.

'Some things,' he continued in a voice she had never heard before, for this man was innately artificial, 'which a woman usually knows before they are told to her.'

'What sort of things, Monsieur le Baron?'

He gave a little laugh. It was so strange a thing to him to be sincere that he felt awkward and abashed. He was surprised at his own sincerity.

'That I love you—hum. You have known it long?'

The face which he could not see was not quite the face of a good woman. Etta was smiling.

'No—o,' she almost whispered.

'I think you must have known it,' he corrected suavely. 'Will you do me the honour of becoming my wife?'

It was very correctly done. Claude de Chauxville had regained control over himself. He was able to think about the riches which were evidently hers. But through the thought he loved the woman.

The lady lowered the feather screen which she was holding between her face and the fire. Regardless of the imminent danger

in which she was placing her complexion, she studied the glowing cinders for some moments, weighing something or some persons in her mind.

‘No, my friend,’ she answered in French at length.

The Baron’s face was drawn and white. Beneath his trim black moustache there was a momentary gleam of sharp white teeth as he bit his lip.

He came nearer to her, leaning one hand on the back of her chair, looking down. He could only see the beautifully dressed hair, the clean-cut profile. She continued to look into the fire, conscious of the hand close to her shoulder.

‘No, my friend,’ she repeated. ‘We know each other too well for that. It would never do.’

‘But when I tell you that I love you,’ he said quietly, with his voice well in control.

‘I did not know that the word was in your vocabulary—you, a diplomat.’

‘And a man—you put the word there—Etta.’

The hand-screen was raised for a moment in objection—presumably to the Christian name of which he had made use.

He waited—passivity was one of his strong points. It had frightened men before this.

Then with a graceful movement she swung suddenly round in her chair looking up at him. She broke into a merry laugh.

‘I believe you are actually in earnest,’ she cried.

He looked quietly down into her face without moving a muscle in response to her change of humour.

‘Very clever,’ he said.

‘What?’ she asked, still smiling.

‘The attitude, the voice, everything. You have known all along that I am in earnest. You have known it for the last six months. You have seen me often enough when I was—well, not in earnest, to know the difference.’

Etta rose quickly. It was some lightning-like woman’s instinct that made her do so. Standing, she was taller than M. de Chauxville.

‘Do not let us be tragic,’ she said coldly. ‘You have asked me to marry you, why, I don’t know. The reason will probably transpire later. I appreciate the honour, but I beg to decline it. Et voilà tout. All is said.’

He spread out apologetic hands.

'All is not said,' he corrected, with a dangerous suavity. 'I acknowledge the claim enjoyed by your sex to the last word. In this matter, however, I am inclined to deny it to the individual.'

Etta Sydney Bamborough smiled. She leant against the mantelpiece with her chin resting on her curved fingers. The attitude was eminently calculated to show to full advantage a faultless figure. She evidently had no desire to cheapen that which she would deny. She shrugged her shoulders and waited.

De Chauville was vain, but he was clever enough to conceal his vanity. He was hurt, but he was man enough to hide it. Under the passivity which was his by nature and practice he had learnt to think very quickly. But now he was at a disadvantage. He was unnerved by his love for Etta—by the sight of Etta before him daringly, audaciously beautiful—by the thought that she might never be his.

'It is not only that I love you,' he said, 'that I have a certain position to offer you. These I beg you to take at their poor value. But there are other circumstances known to both of us which are more worthy of your attention—circumstances which may dispose you to reconsider your determination.'

'Nothing will do that,' she replied; 'not any circumstance.'

Etta was speaking to De Chauville and thinking of Paul Alexis.

'I should like to know since when you have discovered that you never could under any circumstances marry me,' pursued M. de Chauville. 'Not that it matters, since it is too late. I am not going to allow you to draw back now. You have gone too far. All this winter you have allowed me to pay you conspicuous and marked attentions. You have conveyed to me and to the world at large the impression that I had merely to speak in order to obtain your hand.'

'I doubt,' said Etta, 'whether the world at large is so deeply interested in the matter as you appear to imagine. I am sorry that I have gone too far, but I reserve to myself the right of retracing my footsteps wherever and whenever I please. I am sorry I conveyed to you or to any one else the impression that you had only to speak in order to obtain my hand, and I can only conclude that your overweening vanity has led you into a mistake which I will be generous enough to hold my tongue about.'

The diplomatist was for a moment taken aback.

'Mais . . . !' he exclaimed with indignant arms outspread;

and even in his own language he could find nothing to add to the expressive monosyllable.

'I think you had better go,' said Etta quietly. She went towards the fireplace and rang the bell.

M. de Chauville took up his hat and gloves.

'Of course,' he said coldly, his voice shaking with suppressed rage, 'there is some reason for this. There is, I presume, some one else—some one has been interfering. No one interferes with me with impunity. I shall make it my business to find out who is this . . .'

He did not finish; for the door was thrown open by the butler, who announced:

'Mr. Alexis.'

Paul came into the room with a bow towards de Chauville who was going out, and whom he knew slightly.

'I came back,' he said, 'to ask what evening next week you are free. I have a box for the "Huguenots."'

Paul did not stay. The thing was arranged in a few moments, and as he left the drawing-room he heard the wheels of de Chauville's carriage.

Etta stood for a moment when the door had closed behind the two men, looking at the portière which had hidden them from sight, as if following them in thought. Then she gave a little laugh, a queer laugh that might have had no heart in it, or too much, for the ordinary purposes of life. She shrugged her shoulders and took up a magazine, with which she returned to the chair placed for her before the fire by Claude de Chauville.

In a few minutes Maggie came into the room. She was carrying a bundle of flannel.

'The weakest thing I ever did,' she said cheerfully, 'was to join Lady Crewel's working guild. Two flannel petticoats for the young by Thursday morning. I chose the young because the petticoats are so ludicrously small.'

'If you never do anything weaker than that,' said Etta, looking into the fire, 'you will not come to much harm.'

'Perhaps not; what have you been doing—something weaker?'

'Yes. I have been quarrelling with Monsieur de Chauville.'

Maggie held up a petticoat by the selvage (which a male writer takes to be the lower hem), and looked at her cousin through the orifice intended for the waist of the young.

‘If one could manage it without lowering one’s dignity,’ she said, ‘I think that that is the best thing one could possibly do with M. de Chauville.’

Etta had taken up the magazine again. She was pretending to read it.

‘Yes; but he knows too much—about everybody,’ she said.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TALLEYRAND CLUB.

It has been said of the Talleyrand Club that the only qualifications required for admittance to its membership are a frock coat and a glib tongue. To explain the whereabouts of the Talleyrand Club were only a work of supererogation. Many hansom cabmen know it. Hansom cabmen know more than they are credited with.

The Talleyrand, as its name implies, is a diplomatic club, but ambassadors and ministers enter not its portals. They send their juniors. Some of these latter are in the habit of stating that London is the hub of Europe and the Talleyrand smoking-room its grease-box. Certain is it that such men as Claude de Chauville, as Karl Steinmetz, and a hundred others who are or have been political scene-shifters, are to be found in the Talleyrand rooms.

It is a quiet club with many members and sparse accommodation. Its rooms are never crowded, because half of its members are afraid of meeting the other half. It has swinging glass doors to its every apartment, the lower portion of the glass being opaque, while the upper moiety affords a peep-hole. Thus if you are sitting in one of the deep comfortable chairs to be found in all these small rooms, you will be aware from time to time of eyes and a bald head above the ground glass. If you are nobody, eyes and bald head will prove to be the property of a gentleman who does not know you, or knows you and pretends that he does not. If you are somebody, your solitude will depend upon your reputation.

There are quite a number of bald heads in the Talleyrand Club—bald heads surmounting youthful innocent faces. The innocence of these gentlemen is quite remarkable. Like a certain celestial, they are childlike and bland. They ask guileless questions; they make blameless mistakes in respect to facts, and

require correction which they receive meekly. They know absolutely nothing, and their thirst for information is as insatiable as it is unobtrusive.

The atmosphere is vivacious with the light sound of many foreign tongues; it bristles with the ephemeral importance of cheap titles. One never knows whether one's neighbour is an ornament to the 'Almanach de Gotha,' or a disgrace to a degenerate colony of refugees.

Some are plain Messieurs, Señores, or Herren—bluff foreigners with upright hair and melancholy eyes, who put up philosophically with a cheaper brand of cigar than their souls love. Among the latter may be classed Karl Steinmetz—bluffest of the bluff—inno-cent even of his own innocence.

Karl Steinmetz in due course reached England, and in natural sequence the smoking-room—room B on the left as you go in—of the Talleyrand.

He was there one evening after an excellent dinner taken with humorous resignation, smoking the largest cigar the waiter could supply, when Claude de Chauxville happened to have nothing better or nothing worse to do.

De Chauxville looked through the glass door for some seconds. Then he twisted his waxed moustache and lounged in. Steinmetz was alone in the room, and de Chauxville was evidently—almost obviously—unaware of his presence. He went to the table and proceeded to search in vain for a newspaper that interested him. He raised his eyes casually and met the quiet gaze of Karl Steinmetz.

'Ah!' he exclaimed.

'Yes,' said Steinmetz.

'You—in London?'

Steinmetz nodded gravely.

'Yes,' he repeated.

'One never knows where one has you,' Claude de Chauxville went on, seating himself in a deep armchair, newspaper in hand. 'You are a bird of passage.'

'A little heavy on the wing—now,' said Steinmetz.

He laid his newspaper down on his stout knees and looked at de Chauxville over his gold eye-glasses. He did not attempt to conceal the fact that he was wondering what this man wanted with him. The Baron seemed to be wondering what object Steinmetz had in view in getting stout. He suspected some motive in the obesity.

'Ah!' he said deprecatingly. 'That is nothing. Time leaves its mark upon all of us. It was not yesterday that we were in Petersburg together.'

'No,' answered Steinmetz. 'It was before the German Empire—many years ago.'

De Chauxville counted back with his slim fingers on the table—delightfully innocent.

'Yes,' he said, 'the years seem to fly in coveys. Do you ever see any of our friends of that time—you who are in Russia?'

'Who were our friends of that time?' parried Steinmetz, polishing his glasses with a silk handkerchief. 'My memory is a broken reed—you remember?'

For a moment Claude de Chauxville met the full, quiet grey eyes.

'Yes,' he said significantly, 'I remember. Well—for instance, Prince Dawoff?'

'Dead. I never see him—thank Heaven!'

'The Princess?'

'I never see; she keeps a gambling-house in Paris.'

'And little Andrea?'

'Never sees me. Married to a wholesale undertaker, who has buried her past.'

'En gros!'

'Et en détail.'

'The Count Lanovitch,' pursued de Chauxville, 'where is he?'

'Banished for his connection with the Charity League.'

'Catrina?'

'Catrina is living in the province of Tver—we are neighbours—she and her mother, the Countess.'

De Chauxville nodded. None of the details really interested him. His indifference was obvious.

'Ah! the Countess Lanovitch,' he said reflectively, 'she was a foolish woman.'

'And is.'

M. de Chauxville laughed. This clumsy German ex-diplomat amused him immensely. Many people amuse us who are themselves amused in their sleeve.

'And—er—the Sydney Bamboroughs,' said the Frenchman, as if the name had almost left his memory.

Karl Steinmetz lazily stretched out his arm and took up the

Morning Post. He unfolded the sheet slowly, and having found what he sought, he read aloud:

‘His Excellency the Roumanian Ambassador gave a select dinner-party at 4, Craven Gardens, yesterday. Among the guests were the Baron de Chauxville, Feneer Pasha, Lord and Lady Standover, Mrs. Sydney Bamborough, and others.’

Steinmetz threw the paper down and leant back in his chair.

‘So, my dear friend,’ he said, ‘it is probable that you know more about the Sydney Bamboroughs than I do.’

If Claude de Chauxville was disconcerted he certainly did not show it. His was a face eminently calculated to conceal whatever thought or feeling might be passing through his mind. Of an even white complexion—verging on pastiness—he was handsome in a certain statuesque way. His features were always composed and dignified; his hair, thin and straight, was never out of order, but ever smooth and sleek upon his high, narrow brow. His eyes had that dulness which is characteristic of many Frenchmen, and may perhaps be attributed to the habitual enjoyment of too rich a *cuisine* and too many cigarettes.

De Chauxville waved aside the small *contretemps* with easy nonchalance.

‘Not necessarily,’ he said, in cold even tones. ‘Mrs. Sydney Bamborough does not habitually take into her confidence all who happen to dine at the same table as herself. Your confidential woman is usually a liar.’

Steinmetz was filling his pipe; this man had the evil habit of smoking a wooden pipe after a cigar.

‘My very dear de Chauxville,’ he said without looking up, ‘your epigrams are lost on me. I know most of them. I have heard them before. If you have anything to tell me about Mrs. Sydney Bamborough, for heaven’s sake tell it to me quite plainly. I like plain dishes and unvarnished stories. I am a German, you know; that is to say, a person with a dull palate and a thick head.’

De Chauxville laughed again in an unemotional way.

‘You alter little,’ he said. ‘Your plainness of speech takes me back to Petersburg. Yes, I admit that Mrs. Sydney Bamborough rather interested me. But I assume too much; that is no reason why she should interest you.’

‘She does not, my good friend, but you do. I am all attention.’

'Do you know anything of her?' asked de Chauxville perfunctorily, not as a man who expects an answer or intends to believe that which he may be about to hear.

'Nothing.'

'You are likely to know more?'

Karl Steinmetz shrugged his heavy shoulders, and shook his head doubtfully.

'I am not a lady's man,' he added gruffly; 'the good God has not shaped me that way. I am too d——d fat. Has Mrs. Sydney Bamborough fallen in love with me? Has some imprudent person shown her my photograph? I hope not. Heaven forbid.'

He puffed steadily at his pipe, and glanced quickly at de Chauxville through the smoke.

'No,' answered the Frenchman quite gravely. 'Frenchmen, by the way, do not admit that one may be too middle-aged, or too stout, for love. 'But she is *au mieux* with the Prince.'

'Which Prince?'

'Pavlo.'

The Frenchman snapped out the word, watching the other's benevolent countenance. Steinmetz continued to smoke placidly and contentedly.

'My master,' he said at length; 'I suppose that some day he will marry.'

De Chauxville shrugged his shoulders. He touched the button of the electric bell, and when the servant appeared, ordered coffee. He selected a cigarette from a silver case with considerable care, and having lighted it smoked for some moments in silence. The servant brought the coffee, which he drank thoughtfully. Steinmetz was leaning back in his deep chair with his legs crossed. He was gazing into the fire, which burnt brightly, although it was nearly May. The habits of the Talleyrand Club are almost continental. The rooms are always too warm. The silence was that of two men knowing each other well.

'And why not Mrs. Sydney Bamborough?' asked Steinmetz suddenly.

'Why not, indeed?' replied de Chauxville. 'It is no affair of mine. A wise man reduces his affairs to a minimum, and his interest in the affairs of his neighbour to less. But I thought it would interest you.'

'Thanks.'

The tone of the big man in the armchair was not dry. Karl

Steinmetz knew better than to indulge in that pastime. Dryness is apt to parch the fount of expansiveness.

De Chauxville's attention was apparently caught by an illustration in a weekly paper lying open on the table near to him. Your shifty man likes something to look at. He did not speak for some moments. Then he threw the paper aside.

'Who was Sydney Bamborough, at any rate?' he asked with a careless assumption of a slanginess which is affected by society in its decadent periods.

'So far as I remember,' answered Steinmetz, 'he was some thing in the Diplomatic Service.'

'Yes, but what?'

'My dear friend, you had better ask his widow when next you sit next to her at dinner.'

'How do you know that I sat next to her at dinner?'

'I did not know it,' replied Steinmetz with a quiet smile, which left de Chauxville in doubt as to whether he was very stupid or exceedingly clever.

'She seems to be very well off,' said the Frenchman.

'I am glad, as she is going to marry my master.'

De Chauxville laughed almost awkwardly, and for a fraction of a second he changed countenance under Steinmetz's quiet eyes.

'One can never know whom a woman intends to marry,' said he carelessly, 'even if they can themselves, which I doubt. But I do not understand how it is that she is so much better off, or appears to be, since the death of her husband.'

'Ah, she is much better off, or appears to be, since the death of her husband,' said the stout man in his slow Germanic way.

'Yes.'

De Chauxville rose, stretched himself and yawned. Men are not always, be it understood, on their best behaviour at their club.

'Good night,' he said shortly.

'Good night, my very dear friend.'

After the Frenchman had left, Karl Steinmetz remained quite motionless and expressionless in his chair until such time as he concluded that de Chauxville was tired of watching him through the glass door. Then he slowly sat forward in his chair and looked back over his shoulder.

'Our friend,' he muttered, 'is afraid that Paul is going to marry this woman . . . now, I wonder . . . why?'

These two had met before in a past which has little or nothing

to do with the present narrative. They had disliked each other with a completeness partly bred of racial hatred, partly the outcome of diverse interests. But of late years they had drifted apart. There was no reason why the friendship, such as it was, should not have lapsed into a mere bowing acquaintance. For these men were foreigners understanding fully the value of the bow as an interchange of masculine courtesy. Englishmen bow badly.

Steinmetz knew that the Frenchman had recognised him before entering the room. It was to be presumed that he had deliberately chosen to cross the threshold knowing that a recognition was inevitable. Karl Steinmetz went further. He suspected that de Chauville had come to the Talleyrand Club, having heard that he was in England, with the purpose in view of seeking him out and warning him against Mrs. Sydney Bamborough.

‘It would appear,’ murmured the stout philosopher, ‘that we are about to work together for the first time. But if there is one thing that I dislike more than the enmity of Claude de Chauville it is his friendship.’

(To be continued.)

BIRDS IN WINTER.

THE time of the singing of birds is past, and the warped waters have already driven the *dilettante* angler to the library fire and the ever welcome, ever 'seasonable' counsel and garrulities of the Father of the tribe. Until the coming again of the 'stinking violets' the foxhunters will be in their glory, and the hunted otters will have pleasing respite. What Reynard thinks of the merry chase and the deep-mouthed music of the hounds is another matter. Old Nimrods, literary Nimrods, like the late Anthony Trollope and Whyte-Melville, maintained that Reynard liked it, that nothing gave him more delight, not even a raid among a flock of goslings, as a stiff cross-country spin of ten or twenty miles. Of that I know not and trow not; dark and mysterious are the workings of the fox mind, one of the wisest animals left us for the pursuit of legitimate sport. The other side of the coming frosts, and snows, and winter's winds wearily sighing or howling through the leafless woodlands, the more humane and tender aspects of an ideal season, with all its attendant suffering, thus fired the imagination of the noblest of lyric poets:—

When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r.

Ilk happing bird, wee helpless thing!
That in the merry months o' spring
Delighted me to hear thee sing,

What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chattering wing,
An' close thy e'e?

It would not be safe at any time to predict where certain familiar birds will be found roosting in the biting borean storms of winter, but if they are not clemmed for want of food, none of them, not one, will be found 'chattering' its wings, or in other inarticulate dumb show complain of the weather. Burns, in the quick sensitivity of his big and tender heart, only gave expression, in imperishable verse it is true, to a popular belief; still, even in this age of scientific field-naturalist observation and steadily accruing ornithic knowledge, a popular delusion. I have

never known a bird in this country, or in North America during the terribly severe winter of 1875-6, die of cold, but I have seen hundreds and thousands of birds dying and dead of starvation by frost and snow deprivation of natural food. But herein I may err. In ornithic science it is never safe to dogmatise too confidently, so many and so finely differentiated are the variations of physiological and even anatomical appearances and structural forms and habits of the most common of birds under the most ordinary circumstances—

To err is human, to forgive divine—

and some of the ornithological readers of the CORNHILL may differ.

But facts are stubborn 'chiels that winna ding;' it is in what Jack Bunsby called their 'application thereof' we blunder badly, making too sweeping generalisations from either too narrow premises or misunderstanding them wholly. Let us therefore produce our facts, and the reader judge of the inductions.

Take pigeons, homing, 'fancy,' or ordinary, very ordinary, and very extraordinary, in every specific form and picturesque variety. 'Off and on' I have bred pigeons for half a century, and closely studied their ways—and morals—which, as a rule, are of a low order, judged even by the modest standard of avian ethics. Well-fed pigeons, gastronomically pampered pigeons, reared in the dove-cote of luxury, one would think would be sensitively alive to the winter's winds and bitter skies. When

icicles hang by the wall,
And Dick the shepherd blows his nail,
And Tom bears logs into the hall,
And milk comes frozen home in pail,
When blood is nipp'd, and ways be foul,

we might expect the 'gentle doves' to be shivering and huddling together for mutual warmth, in their cracked and draughty wind-swept cotes, into every corner of which the snow has drifted and which the frost has caked into ice. It is not so. High up in the 'immemorial elms' in the spacious parks of England's old ancestral halls, doves may 'moan,' for Tennyson has said so, but they do not moan of cold, and they do not murmur complainingly of the rudest blasts of winter's snow. Singly, or at most in pairs, doves roost in their chosen 'bunks,' however roomy they may be, or however draughty, and woe unto any homeless, starving, wandered stranger who may dare to share it. Hospi-

tality and magnanimity are unknown virtues in the whole tribe of 'gentle doves.' But the wanderer is not cold, and the doves do not 'chitter their wings' in pained and pinched suffering when roosting in the biting wind-swept corners of the best specimen of jerry dovecote building our modern architecture can show. No wind direct from the North Pole, over trackless and snow-mantled Greenland or Iceland, ever ruffled the equanimity of a pigeon on the furthest point of Scotland if it was not pinched for food or water. I have watched my pigeons during biting hurricanes, hurricanes that might have brought the tear to the eye of Friar Bacon's famous 'Head of Brass,' perched on the highest ridge of their house preening their feathers and literally *beaking* in the blast with evident delight. Nor do pigeons, like human beings, grow more sensitive to cold as they advance in years,

When bones are crazed and blood is thin.

The winter of 1893-4 was a trying one—for man, not for birds around my house. They liked it, and some of them paid back my trifling outlay with floods of melody. My pigeons' bathing tank was frequently frozen over. One morning, after breaking and removing the ice, I was pleased to see a venerable and favourite bird, literally on the threshold of the grave, nearly blind with age, feeble in body and growing weak in mind, totter up to the tank and scramble into the icy water, splutter and flap its old wings in evident enjoyment of the refreshing bath. That was too much for a selfish, spiteful vixen, one of my poor old friend's own daughters; so she flew down from her perch and literally hustled her mother out of the tank, and began her own ablutions in the most approved and evidently enjoyable manner. That same winter I had to dig a pigeon out of the tank ice, its feet having been caught firmly whilst resting in the water, apparently quite unconcerned, pecking away at some grain I placed on the ice before the work of 'gaol delivery.' In that most delightful of modern natural history books, 'Letters to Marco,' Mr. G. P. Leslie, R.A., refers to the habit of starlings bathing in the coldest weather, 'The energy with which they shake themselves when thus engaged being very characteristic of these lively birds.' Mr. Leslie thinks that starlings, from their habit of frequenting their old nests in winter, become infested with vermin, and take this means of ridding themselves of those irritating

Little flies with other flies
That on their backs do bite 'em.

That is true of nearly all birds 'in a state of nature,' their sanitary instincts and habits being even more highly developed than those of man himself—or woman either. Probably no bird shows more exuberant delight in a pelting snowstorm than the little snow-bunting, one of the most charming of the *Fringillidae* family. Its native home is within and about the Arctic Circle, and it comes south to Scotland in the last week of September or early in October. Few remain after spring, and fewer still stay on to breed. In the June of last year Mr. L. W. Hinxman, a noted mountaineer, 'stalked' a snow-bunting's nest away up on the Cairngorm range in Aberdeenshire, 3,700 feet above the level of the sea. Buntings of this species come from the far north in large flocks, and are occasionally seen along the Cumbrian coast.

Mr. Macpherson, author of 'The Fauna of Lakeland,' records a phenomenal visit of a flock on the shores of the English Solway on the 12th of January, 1892. The little birds were 'not in hundreds, but in thousands;' and that most careful and erudite ornithologist adds: 'This was the more remarkable because the snow-bunting is by no means a numerous visitor to the north-west coast of England in ordinary seasons.' What brought that vast flock of these Arctic birds to the Solway? We may as well ask what is the generic *motif* of avian migration generally; and the answer would be the same—we know not. Certain facts of migration we do know, and as these accumulate and become sifted and assorted as it were, the future Dixons, Tristrams, and Hartings may raise upon them the superstructure of an unassailable theory; at present we know no more than the Plinies did nearly two thousand years ago. In his invaluable notes on the birds of Iona and Mull, the greatest of living Scotch naturalists, Mr. Harvie Brown, F.Z.S., makes mention of the habits of the snow-buntings and the tiny blue sparrows of North America. 'This interesting winter visitor' (bunting), says Mr. Brown, 'does not remain with us long at a time, but is blown here by hard gales or driven by unusual frost, and at such times the little flocks or parties that arrive affect the sea shore, where they trip about like dotterel on the sand. This is almost the only little land bird known to be identical in both hemispheres. I have met it wheeling about the frozen surface of Lake Ontario more than a mile from shore, and have seen them (with the thermometer 20° below zero) driving about in large flocks, mingling with the snowflakes which

darkened the air, as the bitter blast bellowed over the whitened plain.

‘When man and beast are housed, and even the domestic fowls, with frost-bitten combs and toes, huddle in their roost; when all manner of beast and bird is either far away in the south, or else in byre or stall, or den or nest, the hardy little snowflake is whirling about at his ease in the terrible blast, which would be death to almost any other living creature.

‘This, and the little blue sparrow, called the snowbird or chirpbird, are the only two birds which brave the whole Canadian winter, but the latter is domestic, and clings to man’s abodes for shelter and sustenance.’

How certain birds obtain sufficient food and water to exist in prolonged visitations of snow and frost has often puzzled travellers, who were at the same time observant naturalists, and the puzzle has not yet been solved. Nevertheless, given abundance of food, birds are not dainty when pinched for provender, for I have known robins take kindly to a carnivorous diet of raw meat and the remains of dead rabbits, rats, voles, and even other robins. Their healthy and resourceful adaptability to the most severe climatic conditions has never to me been matter of wonder. ‘I often wondered,’ writes Mr. J. Turner-Turner in his interesting ‘Three Years’ Trapping in the Great North-West’ of America, ‘in the hard weather what became of all the birds, and even to a certain extent of the small animals as well. They could not have migrated, for on the first mild day the birds were to be seen in numbers; but during the intense cold, when I should have thought hunger would have tempted them to the spot where they knew scraps were to be found, it was quite the exception to see them, while as regards grouse, especially the dusky grouse, I have passed perhaps a month of hard weather without seeing one, but on the first mild day I have found as many as seven. Where, then, they passed their time during the intense cold, unless in the tree-tops, remains a mystery to me, for, unlike the other species, I never knew them to seek shelter under the snow.’ Strange and mysterious indeed. But the birds, in the circumstances referred to by Mr. Turner, do not migrate, neither do they hibernate. Hibernating animals awake to new life, as it were, in a weak and exhausted condition, more or less, and that was not characteristic of the birds that attracted the attention of Mr. Turner, or of any other traveller naturalist who has roughed it in

the wild North-West in wintry weather. In opposition to a popular belief, I hold that the partial and irregular migratory birds that remain with us during winter, and our familiar permanent residents, suffer nothing from the severest snows and frosts if food and water are obtainable. That is strikingly manifested in the appearance and actions of our winter songsters: robins, wrens, missel-thrushes, starlings, the latter irregularly but frequently heard in 'blinks of bonny sunshine;' and skylarks, song thrushes, and blackbirds less frequently, in fact rarely. The cock chaffinches, who remain during winter, do not sing, but there is no inflection of sadness over their voluntary 'spell' of bachelorhood in their cheery 'pink, pink.' The chaffinch does not pine for his mate; *au contraire*, he revels in the sweet solace of freedom from domestic cares, &c., and if he can only obtain food and water his plumage is beautiful, and his life is indeed a happy one. It is the same with the robins. That most engaging of all our native birds never looks brighter-eyed and fresher and glossier in feathered coloration than he does on the holly bush, when

A' the hills are covered wi' snow,

and where he pipes his unrestrained melody with a joyous exuberance that precludes the thought of any mental depression or physical suffering.

This singing of the birds in winter does not 'fit in' with the theory that avian music owed its origin, and almost perfectibility in some birds, to sexual rivalry and vocal tournaments for the possession of coveted hens. Mr. Charles Dixon, than whom a better field naturalist and careful scientific ornithologist does not live, has marshalled many facts and plausible arguments in support of the theory, but because other strong facts and cogent inductions therefrom do not support it (if, indeed, they do not refute it) the careful scientist avoids confident dogmatism on such phenomena, where variability and marked differentiations of habits and shapes and colorations so constantly recur in birds of the same species. John Ford, the dramatist (1585-1642), who must have been an observant field naturalist, to judge from the profusion and general accuracy of reference to birds, &c., in his plays, makes very beautiful poetic use of the theory of avian song rivalry. With pardonable license he extends it to a nightingale's rivalry of the lute-playing of a love-sick maiden in a solitary grove. The passages occur in the first act of the 'Lover's Melancholy,' and,

apart from its value as evidence of the ancient popularity of a theory which scientists have only within the last few years deigned to treat seriously, it possesses no little poetic merit. The *dramatis personæ* are Menaphon and Amethus, and 'the well-shaped youth' is the fair Eroclea in the disguise of a page.

Men.

A nightingale,

Nature's best skilled musician, undertakes
The challenge, and for every several strain
The well-shaped youth could touch, she sung her own;
He could not run division with more art
Upon his quaking instrument than she,
The nightingale, did with her various notes
Reply to: for a voice and for a sound,
Amethus, 'tis much easier to believe
That such they were than hope to hear again.

Amet. How did the rivals part?

Men.

You term them rightly;

For they were rivals, and their mistress, Harmony.
Some time thus spent, the young man grew at last
Into a pretty anger, that a bird,
Whom art had never taught cliffs, moods, or notes,
Should vie with him for mastery, whose study
Had busied many hours to perfect practice;
To end the controversy, in a rapture
Upon his instrument he plays so swiftly
So many voluntaries, and so quick
That there was curiosity and cunning,
Concord in discord, lines of differing method
Meeting in one full centre of delight.

Amet. Now for the bird.

Men.

The bird, ordained to be

Music's first martyr, strove to imitate
These several sounds, which when her warbling throat
Failed in, for grief down dropped she on his lute,
And brake her heart. It was the quaintest sadness
To see the conqueror upon her hearse
To weep a funeral elegy of tears;
That, trust me, my Amethus, I could chide
Mine own unmanly weakness, that made me
A fellow-mourner with him.

In dealing with one of the side issues of social and ethical evolution, M. Letourneau, Professor of Anthropology at the Paris University, refers to the significance of the song tournaments of birds in the pairing season, and asserts that rivals engaged in them 'often die of exhaustion' ('Evolution of the Family'). I know of no recorded authentic evidence to that effect, although the wild strains of rival song of birds in grove and meadow are familiar to my ears even as household words. Nor is the note of emulous

pipings pitched high, and varied, and prolonged from the *motif* of love or sexual rivalry alone. The missel-thrush never sings but in winter, and it is even heard to best advantage during the pauses of a wild hurricane sweeping over land and through forest glades. Hence the popular name, 'stormcock.' Such choristers of the woods live happily, and even comfortably, in the severest of our winters, if they can only obtain food and plenty of water.

Probably the most wonderful example of avian indifference to frost, or rather of the want of effect of the coldest waters on birds' legs, is exemplified in the habits of the humming-birds of America. The diminutive size of these creatures and the extraordinary delicacy of their bones and whole nervous system are notorious. The broad-tailed species (*Trochilus platycercus*), if stripped of its beautiful feathers, is no larger than one of our common bumble bees. Some years ago, when Dr. Merriam, Chief of the Ornithological Section of the American Agricultural Department, was on a scientific expedition in the mountain regions of San Francisco, he encountered flocks of hundreds of these beautiful little creatures, and he described their habits in a bulletin which he issued in 1890. 'They wake up very early in the morning,' says Dr. Merriam, 'and go to water at daylight, no matter how cold the weather is. During the month of August, when the mornings were often frosty, hundreds of them came to the spring to drink and bathe at break of day. . . . They would drop down to the water, dip their feet and bellies, and rise and shoot away as if propelled by an unseen power.' And yet these pigmy birds are essentially creatures of flower and sunshine. Truly, the mysteries of bird-life are, in many respects, mysterious and (apparently) past finding out.

Birds, I believe, never absolutely die of cold. I question if they even feel it as man does, and I attribute their invulnerability to the closeness and warmth of their feathery covering, the peculiar texture of the skin of their feet and legs, the fatty plumpness of their flesh, the warmth and richness of their blood, and other purely physiological characteristics. If kindly disposed people, in the visitations of severe weather, take care to spare a little for the birds, the birds will take care of themselves—and be healthy, wealthy, and happy—and the robins and wrens, at least, will pay back with interest in floods of that melody which is indeed a 'glorious gift of God' to the 'poor man's choristers,' and which they do not, in winter at all events, pour forth in emulous rivalry and for purely selfish sexual ends.

BRINGING DOWN THE HOUSE.

THE other day Bates and I made, I am sorry to say, the most terrible fools of ourselves. The curate of our parish, Mr. Damian, came in to see me one evening. Bates was with me, having a smoke and a chat, and Damian sat down and had a pipe with us. During the course of conversation, Damian mentioned that he was busy getting up a little entertainment—merely a small parish affair—for the benefit of somebody or something, I forget what. He said he had met with difficulty in beating up a sufficiency of the performing element; he had a reciter, he said, no end of a fellow; also a funny man, two singing ladies and a piano-playing one. What he still required was one more singing lady, or, better than that, a tenor—if such could be found—a bass singer and an accompanist. It was only a small local thing, Damian repeated, and the audience would be very appreciative and quite uncritical. Didn't we know any good-natured girl, or an unpretending tenor (a *rara avis* this, Damian said), or a good rollicking bass for sea-songs, or, lastly, an obliging accompanist who would accompany the entire party and play a rousing waltz to start the show and the national anthem to wind up?

Now it so happens that dear old Bates has a rather pleasing tenor voice; you should hear him sing 'When other lips,' a couple of notes lower and with the highest note modified; it is really quite a treat. I sometimes accompany Bates myself, when the music is in flats and there are not too many of them. I never play in sharps; no composer with any self-respect ought to write in sharps; after all, 'He only does it to annoy, because he knows it teases!' or, perhaps, because he is anxious to show the public what a musician he is, and that it is just as easy for a man like him to compose in some awful key, like Z sharp minor, as in a law-abiding and respectable one that sticks as far as possible to the self-respecting white notes and abjures the blacks. Well, Bates possesses, as I have mentioned, a small but pleasing tenor voice, while I am, in a very modest way, an accompanist. Now these parsons are very, very deep sometimes; and though I am certain that Damian, good man, was perfectly well aware of the facts concerning Bates and myself which I have just mentioned (though how

he learned them is an eternal mystery), yet he did not in the slightest degree betray his knowledge while leading up to the subject of the impending entertainment and of his pressing need of performers. Without a thought for the consequences, I now rushed in and made a fool of myself: 'By Jove, Bates,' I said, 'why, this is the very opportunity for you!'

'Is Mr. Bates an accompanist?' asked Damian innocently. 'How delightful!' Oh, these parsons! I was a mere dove in the grip of the eagle. I pointed out that Bates was a tenor, and added that it was merely out of consideration for the feelings of Mr. Edward Lloyd and other youthful aspirants that he had not long since stepped forth, like Achilles from his tent, and conquered the musical world.

'How charming!' said that wily ecclesiastic. 'You will sing for us of course, Mr. Bates; dear me, what a treat it will be for us all to hear you! I only hope we shall find an accompanist worthy of the occasion.' 'Oh, well,' said Bates, 'I'll sing if you like, since it's merely a little parish concern, but only on condition that that driveller there (Bates referred to me in this rude manner) plays the accompaniment. He can't play much, but he jumps on the notes he knows I am shaky on; besides, I prefer an accompanist whom I can kick at discretion.'

'What, does Jones play?' said that deceitful curate; 'how very charming! Come now, Jones, you must do all the accompaniments for us on Friday week, and you'll throw in a waltz to set the thing going. You won't refuse, I know, for a good cause; really, this visit was most providential.'

'Now look here, Damian,' I said; 'I will play for Bates, because I have been the short-sighted means of involving the poor innocent in the meshes you had laid for him; I will not desert poor Bates in his need; he cannot possibly take an E or an F without my aid, and I shall therefore see Bates through; but as for accompanying any one else, Damian, I absolutely and decisively decline; you must go and find other prey.' I suppose I looked dangerous; anyhow Damian understood that I saw through him, for, after a quick glance at my face, he talked of other things, and soon afterwards he left us.

And so it happened that Bates and I committed ourselves to this foolish undertaking. There were ten clear days in which we could work up our songs for the entertainment. Bates came over every evening and practised with me. He was to sing twice, and his songs were: 'The sun is setting on the hill' (which the

programme converted into 'The sun is sitting on the hill'), this for the first portion; while for the second part we reserved Bates's *cheval de bataille*: 'When other lips.' Our rehearsals went off satisfactorily enough on the whole. 'When other lips' was really rather nice; of course Bates did not attempt to take the high A flat—that would have been a foolish thing to do; we altered all the A's and G's into notes which a plain man can take with some show of modesty and self-respect. In the first song there was an F sharp which rather bothered Bates; 'The sun is setting' is a love-ditty of five verses, and the high note comes at the end of each. Bates rose to it surprisingly well sometimes, but at other times he shied a little at it; still, on the whole, the song went well enough, and we were confident that all would go brilliantly 'on the day.' Well, that day came round at last; and when it did, I was realising fairly and fully what a fool I had been to consent to face, for the first time in my life, an audience. As a matter of fact, I felt as nervous as though I were about to be shot. As for poor Bates, that artiste's condition was melancholy in the extremest sense of the word. He looked in three times during the course of the day in order to remind me to 'give him that F sharp.' If I didn't, Bates declared, he would denounce me in public. I said he should have his F sharp all right if I could see to strike it; but to tell him the honest truth, I added, I was getting so nervous already that I could hardly tell which were the black and which were the white notes on the piano. 'Do you know, old chap,' said Bates, 'it's the most ridiculous thing in the world, but I am a bit nervous myself!' There was no need for the poor fellow to tell me this, for he was looking as old and haggard and restless as though he had murdered some one and 'it' had been to call on him about midnight. 'After all,' Bates added, 'it's only a little wretched parish affair, and the audience—if there is one (here we both laughed the unnecessary and unconvincing uproariousness of extreme nervousness)—will consist of boys and people who know much less about music than even we ourselves do.'

'Yes,' I repeated, 'only boys, with perhaps a few orange-sucking, nut-cracking sisters thrown in.'

'I really think I'm good enough for that kind of audience—what d'ye think?' said Bates with an affectation of confidence which he was far from feeling.

'Rather!' said I; 'let them have it loud and strong, and they'll take you for a Mario.'

Once again before the evening Bates came in to remind me about that F sharp, and to exchange assurances as to the inability of an audience such as we should have to discriminate one tune from another. Afterwards we dined together. Bates would not eat; he said that singers never eat for four hours before singing; but he drank some porter—without which, he assured me, no singer ever thinks of facing an audience. ‘Why, there was Mario now,’ Bates said; ‘he never performed any scene in any opera without having a big mug of stout hidden for him behind some rock or tree, or even behind a good sturdy page or somebody, on the stage.’ Mario used to go behind this object, whatever it was, Bates said, pretending to be looking for the enemy or searching for the girl of the piece, or somebody, have a pull at the stout, and then come out again and go on with the opera. ‘You can’t sing without lots of porter,’ Bates concluded, ‘any one will tell you that; ask Santley or any other singing fellow.’ Bates may be right; but, as a matter of fact, I have observed the strangest divergence of opinion among singers as to the question of eating and drinking. One will assure you that no singer with the most elementary knowledge of what’s what will attempt to perform unless he can step straight from the dinner-table upon the stage, and that all wines, beer, and spirits are, for singers, rankest poison. Another is equally convinced that the singer who attempts to warble sweetly upon a full stomach is a mere ignoramus, four or five hours being the narrowest margin of time which should elapse between eating and singing. As for drink, he will tell you, personally he swears by port wine, and lots of it, but others prefer beer or porter; some take champagne. Any of these are good to sing upon, but no food must be taken; the starvation system is the only true secret of good singing. A third artiste declares that he eats what he likes and drinks what he likes and does it *when* he likes, and that he laughs at all faddists; the foolery about starving before singing, he says, is ridiculous, and so is the theory of stuffing—one is as foolish as the other. Eat when it suits you, and drink when it suits you—that’s his system, he says, and any one who does otherwise must be a fool. Now, all three of these persons sing delightfully, so that it is somewhat difficult to decide who is right and who is wrong. Personally, I think the last-quoted gentleman must be about right—the person who steers a middle course; as a general rule, I find it is best to ride in the middle of the road; there is less chance of falling into the ditch on either side.

When Bates and I reached that fatal hall—the schoolroom of the parish—we found it completely filled with an impatient public. Occupying three or four rows of chairs in the very front were the aristocracy of the district, mostly ladies; next behind these came the parents of the school-children; while these latter filled to overflowing the end seats of the hall, and were occupied in the usual schoolboy avocations of nut-cracking, bear-fighting, orange-sucking, and whistling. The aspect of the place did not have the effect of putting Bates and me at our ease. To begin with, we had not bargained for the four rows of educated people in front. We felt that Damian was not quite playing a fair game, and I made a mental resolution to speak very straight to Damian afterwards. As for the bawling, whistling, ballyragging boys at the end, they simply terrified us; we found our places with difficulty, and floundered into them in a condition of mind which bordered upon the dazed.

Presently, the moment for the sacrifice of the first victim having arrived, Damian mounted upon the stage and made a few introductory remarks. He said the usual things—how good it was of all of us to sing and play, and so on, and how very virtuous everybody else was to come and listen; in fact, he made us comfortable all round, to the best of his ability—though he entirely failed in Bates's case and my own. His voice sounded to me miles away, and he and the stage turned round and round all the while he was speaking. Then Damian made way for a poor young thing—the picture of despair and woe—who sat down and began to play the initiatory waltz. She was so nervous at first that the piano would not respond to her feeble touch; but presently, finding that no one listened and that she had not interrupted the sports at the end of the room, she cheered up, and for the last two or three minutes the piano had quite a rough time at her hands. Heavens! how Bates and I applauded when she had finished! It seemed to comfort us to violently clap our hands; it worked off a little of the horror that overwhelmed us. Ours was the fifth item on the programme, so that we had plenty of time to enjoy, with what appetite we might, the efforts of several earlier performers. After the waltz came a recitation by—I can't recall the name, but it sounded—so Bates said afterwards—like Horatius Cocles; I think it was Ignatius Brockley, or something like it. Ignatius was a tremendous fellow. He recited the 'Charge of the Light Brigade' in a manner to convince even the Philistines at the

further end of the hall. He was only moderately insane up to the place where 'some one had blundered;' but these latter words appeared to excite him to frenzy, and he suddenly became a dangerous lunatic. He behaved like a rampant, raging madman. He shook his fist at us all as he careered up and down the stage; he ducked his head as though dodging cannon-balls; he raised his sword (a ruler) and cheered on his men; he reeled—wounded; he reached the foe and dug at him fiercely with ugly bayonet thrusts; he spiked the guns with cheers and hoarse shouts, and then he galloped home like the hero that he was, and wiped the perspiration from his brow as he came down the steps amid a storm of shouts and yells and whistlings and hand-clappings, and I'm sure we all felt very proud of ourselves as Britons, and wished we could all be as noble as Ignatius. We encored the hero lustily—especially Bates and I, for we were naturally anxious to put off the evil hour. But Ignatius gave us to understand that his feelings were too much for him—at least, that is how I interpreted his actions; he returned to the stage and bowed and smiled, but wagged his head in a negative manner, and continued to wipe his brow with one hand while he covered his heart with the other. Reciters, I have observed, are occasionally much affected by their own performances; the audience likes them to be so, and thinks great things of the reciter who can make himself cry—they take him for a poet, and tell one another that 'that young fellow will be heard of,' and so on. The soul of Ignatius was clearly far too large for his body, which was a very little one.

Next after the reciter, who had certainly scored a great success, came a lady singer. There was a great deal of the lady and very little of the singer. It is a comical thing to see an extremely tall lady open her mouth and emit a sound about as loud as the piping of a young hedge-sparrow. The boys at the end found it very funny indeed, and said so. They laughed a good deal about it—the thing seemed quite to strike them. The song itself was very inoffensive, and the sentiments expressed were extremely commendable, but no one listened to them; the pearls were entirely thrown away before the little pigs at the back of the hall, who did not interrupt their eating and their romping to pick them up. The singer was not nervous—she was an old hand—but when she was forced to retire without an encore she appeared to be deeply pained by so marked a lack of taste in her audience, and I overheard her mention to Mr. Damian, as he escorted her to her place, that she had never before sung to so inappreciative a body of

people as his parishioners. Damian got out of the difficulty somehow—trust Damian for that!—but I did not catch his reply; indeed, I had enough to keep me employed in the reflection that there now remained but one performance before Bates and I should be called upon to appear. I cannot recall a single detail as to the next item—neither can Bates. It was the turn of the funny man, and I remember that the audience were kept in roars of laughter, in which Bates and I joined uproariously, although I am perfectly certain that both Bates's head and my own were buzzing to such an extent that we did not hear a single word of what the fellow was saying or singing. An encore gave us a minute or two of reprieve, and then time was up—the fateful hour had struck, horrid destiny was at our door.

Half conscious, dizzy, and entirely miserable, I rose from my seat and followed Bates towards the stage. As for Bates himself, I really think that, if such a thing is possible, his condition was even more wretched than my own. I have a faint recollection—Bates cannot remember anything about it—that Bates, in climbing the steps to reach the stage, tripped up over the top one and dropped his music, and that the entire audience, together with myself, laughed heartily at his misfortune, and that Bates laughed also in a feeble sort of way, and said 'Come on!' and that I did come on and sank into my seat at the piano in a pitiful condition. Bates had both copies of the song, I recollect, and could not be got to understand that I required one to play from. Perhaps I whispered so feebly that he failed to hear—anyhow, he stood there smiling idiotically and looking from me to the audience and back again, as if he could not recall what he had come there for, but hoped to remember in a minute or two if left to himself by an indulgent public. At last, apparently, he comprehended what I required of him, for he suddenly blurted out, quite loudly, 'Oh, I beg your pardon,' and handed me the music. A boy at the end bawled out, 'Don't mention it!' and we all laughed again.

Then I struck out into the symphony, of which I omitted to sound at least half of the notes written and played the rest wrong, and then . . .

Surely that cannot be Bates singing? It is not the voice of Bates. His was never a loud organ; but this is the voice of a very sparrow and no man. Nevertheless it appears to be Bates who is producing the sound. 'The sun is setting on the hill'—dear me, what a long way off it seems to be!—I don't mean the sun nor the hill, but Bates's voice. I must remember to give him

that F sharp when it comes . . . As the dangerous place draws nearer, however, I become sadly conscious that if I do attempt to give Bates his F sharp, all the rest of the accompaniment will assuredly go by the board. It has come to this: either I must wreck Bates or I must myself be wrecked; which shall it be? The unsuspecting Bates—who trusts me—is meanwhile approaching the rocks. What can he know of the torments which are overwhelming me because of him? My mind is made up; Bates shall become a sheer hulk in a minute. After all, it is better to play the accompaniment as it is written—the composer knew what he was about, I suppose. Here's the place. 'Then, love, good night!' sings poor Bates in his far-away, sparrow-like tones; 'good night!' Alas! the high note, that fatal F sharp, should have come on the repetition of the word 'good night.' It never came. Bates says he thinks he went at it in the usual way, but, as a matter of fact, he did nothing of the sort. Instead of galloping boldly at it and taking it in his stride, he, as it were, trotted up to it and skipped at it in a half-hearted, donkey-ride kind of manner which was quite sure to end in disaster. It did end in disaster. The note came, what there was of it, in a squeaky treble, as though Bates were a schoolboy and his voice were just cracking.

Well, it appeared that nothing could have pleased the audience better. They roared and shouted with delight at the far end of the room, and they encored that F sharp to the echo. Bates laughed also in a feeble, idiotic kind of way, and so did I; mirth is infectious, and the well-dressed people in the front rows, seeing that we were ourselves amused and not offended, joined in the laughter. I remember glancing at the audience about this time, and noticing that our two places were empty, and wondering in a dazed kind of manner where Bates and I could be, and hoping we had not got into mischief, though I felt something was not right with us. Then I thumped out the symphony to the second verse, and Bates began before I had finished it. Then came an exciting chase for the rest of the verse—I pursuing Bates, and cutting off corners of bars in order to overhaul him—Bates cleverly keeping ahead, and winning eventually by a short neck. One would think that he was insanely anxious to reach that F sharp, yet when he did reach it (I being then about a bar behind), he made, if possible, a feeblér effort to take the note than he had done on the first occasion. But the audience evinced the most friendly and flattering interest in Bates's voice, and when the high note loomed in the distance,

several persons stood up to see it come. It was hailed with shouts of delight when it arrived, and the mirth was general and unaffected. During the symphony to the following verse Bates received several pieces of useful advice from the far end of the room. One boy recommended him, I remember, to suck a lozenge. Another counselled him to 'eave it orf the chest.' Bates did not do either; it might have been better if he had, it could not very well have been worse. During the progress of the third and fourth verses the excitement was intense; that F sharp was looked for—longed for by its many admirers in the hall; they could hardly restrain their impatience when the place where they knew it must reappear hove in view; it was hailed as an old friend now, and was beloved like one too; the boys practised it while the rest of the verse was going on, and the audience shouted *en masse* when it came. Bates grinned pleasantly, if feebly, when the people roared their delight, though he is under the impression to this hour that he frowned horribly at the 'little brutes down at the end;' he never frowned at all, as a matter of fact. And so at last we reached the fifth verse. By this time I had realised that an effort must really be made in order that we might at least leave that stage with flying colours, and I determined to do my very best to support poor old Bates on his last high note or perish in the attempt. As we approached it, going fairly well together—I think he was a crotchet or so ahead, but nothing to matter—I gathered nerve to whisper, 'Now then, old chap, pull yourself together for the last F sharp—show them what you're made of!'

Bates showed them what he was made of, and I am sorry to be obliged to admit that the material was very poor indeed. There is nothing of the ordinary amateur tenor about Bates—none of that vulgar love of display upon the highest notes—you know what I mean: the fellow gets hold of a high A, or something equally phenomenal, and there he stays far beyond the span of time allotted to it by the composer. In vain the accompanist looks appealingly at the singer as though he would say, 'Oh, *do* let go and come down, and let's get on to the next chord. I want to get home to my tea;' while the singer retaliates with a glare of great ferocity and determination, which I always take to mean 'Not if I know it! Here I am and here I intend to remain as long as my breath holds out—it is not every tenor, my good man, who can take this note and hold it.' Well, what I mean is, there is nothing of that sort of thing about dear old Bates, but

on this occasion, perhaps, my words roused him from his dazed condition, and he certainly did his best to pull himself together as I had bidden him. He went at that last F sharp like a hero, and alas! like a hero he fell. As a matter of fact, I think it was I who 'gave him away,' for, in my anxiety to do my best for Bates, I made a wild lunge at that F sharp—and missed it clean. F sharp, as my musical readers are aware, is a black note; well, I rushed at that black F sharp and alighted on one of its neighbours, a white note—G, I believe, or perhaps E—anyhow, its merits were *nil* in comparison with those of F sharp. Bates, meanwhile, had just reached the latter note and was doing fairly well on it, when in I rushed with my G. When Bates heard my G, his voice, for some reason which I do not attempt to explain or excuse, lost all sense of decency and propriety and went off suddenly into a loud crack and a gurgle. In a word, the last F sharp was the worst of the five.

I descended from that fateful platform with my entire inner being turning round and round, and with a dim consciousness that two fellows had just made awful fools of themselves and amused us all very much, but I could not recollect the poor fellows' names. I have since recalled them all right.

Bates and I stumbled into our seats amid roars and yells of applause. The ladies in the front rows were swaying about and crying with laughter, and the boys at the end, probably imagining that the whole thing was intentionally done, were deafening in their delight. Bates and I laughed a good deal too; but then we were no longer answerable for our actions, being in a sort of delirium.

We were encored, of course, but Bates could not be got to understand what was wanted of him, he was too dazed; all he could do was to repeat idiotically, 'What, old chap?' to everything that was said to him. At length I made a supreme effort and pulled myself together, telling Damian that we were obliged to catch a train. I lugged my poor friend down the hall and out into the air—our departure being accompanied by staves of 'So, love, good night!' mostly on the high F sharp.

'Bates, Bates,' I said, as we stumbled homewards with the chilly sense of failure upon us, 'how came we to make such asses of ourselves as to perform in public? And oh, Bates! *why* did you sing like a sparrow and not like a man?'

'What, old chap?' said poor Bates.

THE OLD CRITICISM.

CRITICS, according to Lord Bacon, are the brushers of noblemen's clothes. According to Longfellow, they hold the higher office of 'sentinels in the grand army of letters, stationed at the corners of newspapers and reviews, to challenge every new author.' Neither definition, however, takes into account the fact that there is a fashion in criticism as in most other things, and while at one period the critics are the spatterers rather than the brushers of noblemen's clothes, at another they are unfaithful sentinels, who, without challenging the new author, lay down their arms at his approach, and welcome him into the citadel. In the reception accorded to poetical works this fluctuation of sentiment is most strongly marked. At the present time, for example, reviewers have an amiable tendency to transpose each minor poet into the major key, and to consider eccentricity an excellent substitute for originality. But in the early decades of this century a new poet seems to have been looked upon in much the same light as a 'first offender' in some particularly dangerous branch of criminality. The critics' primary impulse was to tell the poetical intruder not to do it again; their second to warn the public against reading the new poem. In order to accomplish the latter object the work was pulled to pieces, little inaccuracies were ruthlessly displayed, and fanciful metaphors, newly coined words, and innocent indulgences in poetical license held up to ridicule and contempt.

It must be admitted that the early nineteenth-century reviewers took their profession seriously. They prided themselves upon being the leaders of the public taste, the guardians of the public morals, and the custodians of the precious traditions of the correct school of poetry. Addison and Pope were their idols, and the heroic couplet their favourite form of versification; but for the fantastic genius who put new ideas into strange metres they had neither understanding nor sympathy. Fortunately for posterity the vital spark of poets like Byron, Wordsworth, and Shelley was too bright to be extinguished by the clumsy sarcasm of a Gifford or a Jeffrey. Even Keats, as we know now, died of a consumption whose symptoms were only slightly aggravated by a criticism.

Indeed, the famous review of 'Endymion' in the 'Quarterly' was by no means one of the most vicious of its kind, though well calculated to make a sickly genius smart. It was annoying, no doubt, to be called 'a disciple of the new school of Cockney poetry, in which incongruous ideas are clothed in uncouth language,' and to be described as a copyist of Mr. Leigh Hunt, 'only more unintelligible and ten times as absurd.' The review in the 'Edinburgh' a couple of years later was comparatively flattering, for the writer declared that 'Endymion' was 'as full of genius as of absurdity,' and discovered harmony and feeling in the 'Ode to a Nightingale,' as well as liveliness in the 'Lines to Fancy.' 'Mr. K.' was finally dismissed with the benevolent injunction neither to 'waste the good gifts of nature on intractable themes, nor to luxuriate too recklessly on such as are more suitable.'

With the poems of the youthful Byron the 'Edinburgh' Reviewer made fine sport, little dreaming that he had caught a Tartar in the presumably foolish young lordling. In cutting up the 'Hours of Idleness,' the critic was better justified than upon other occasions when he used the knife; still, it is just as well that Byron did not take to heart the advice to forthwith abandon poetry, and turn his talents and opportunities to better account. The sting contained in the remark that 'the poesy of this young lord belongs to the class which neither the gods nor men are said to permit,' was returned with interest in the lines—

A man must serve his time to every trade
Save censure; critics are all ready-made.

And again—

Believe a woman or an epitaph
Or any other thing that's false before
You trust in critics, who themselves are sore,

Four years later, when Byron had 'arrived,' the 'Edinburgh,' at the conclusion of a most respectful notice of 'Childe Harold,' observed: 'If we viewed with astonishment the immeasurable fury with which the minor poet received the innocent pleasantry (!) and mild castigation of our remarks on his first publication, we now feel nothing but pity for the strange irritability of temper which can still cherish a private resentment for such a cause—or wish to perpetuate the memories of personalities so outrageous as to have been injurious only to their author.' It is amusing to note Jeffrey's tone of sorrowful surprise at the phenomenon of a poet actually turning the tables upon his reviewers.

The appearance of a volume of poems by Wordsworth in 1807 was the signal for a savage onslaught in the 'Edinburgh.' The peculiarities of diction of the disciples of the new school of poetry were enough, in the critic's opinion, to render them ridiculous; but Mr. Wordsworth, he added, 'really seems anxious to court this literary martyrdom by a device still more infallible—we mean that of connecting his most lofty, tender, or impassioned conceptions with objects and incidents which the greater part of his readers will probably persist in thinking low, silly, or uninteresting.' After denying to Wordsworth any pretensions to elegance, dignity, or correctness of versification, the reviewer concludes with the following significant passage: 'We venture to hope that there is now an end of this folly, and that, like other follies, it will be found to have cured itself by the extravagance resulting from its unbridled indulgence . . . and we think there is reason to hope that the lamentable consequences which have resulted from Mr. Wordsworth's open violation of the established laws of poetry will operate as a wholesome warning to those who might otherwise have been seduced by his example, and be the means of restoring to that ancient and venerable code its due honour and authority.'

The established laws of poetry were the established stumbling-blocks of the older critics, who failed to realise that when a genius appears among us the least we can do to show our gratitude is to allow him to make his own laws, and to drive a coach and horses, if it so please him, through the most ancient and venerable code. The 'Quarterly' Reviewer, in his notice of 'The White Doe of Rylstone,' unwittingly exposes the weaknesses and prejudices of his class when he says that the work 'is so *out-of-the-way* a production in many respects that we are not sure but it would be wiser to shake the head at such a ballad sort of poem than to risk our authority with the public by recommending it as a beautiful performance.' The same writer expresses with amusing *naïveté* his determination not to be appreciative or admiring where the works of so eccentric an author are concerned when he says: 'In this, as in any other line of poetry to which *he may dedicate himself*, Mr. Wordsworth has something to learn and a good deal to unlearn.'

In their office of guardians of the public morals the reviewers naturally fell foul of Shelley, his theories and his practice, and agreed in holding up the author of 'Queen Mab' to public ignominy as a conventional villain of melodramatic type. Indeed,

they were so busily occupied in discussing the domestic affairs of the poet, that they had little time or space for a consideration of his works. The 'Quarterly' Reviewer in April 1818, after dismissing 'The Revolt of Islam' with the epithets 'insupportably dull' and 'laboriously obscure,' describes the author as 'a young inexperienced man, imperfectly educated, irregular in his application, and shamefully dissolute in his conduct;' and continues: 'From his childhood he has carried about with him a soured discontented spirit—unteachable in boyhood, unamiable in youth, querulous and unmanly in manhood—singularly unhappy in all three.' 'Personal journalism' is not generally supposed to have been invented in 1818, yet the following extract from the same notice is a very well-developed specimen of what in these days would be included under the above heading: 'If we might withdraw the veil of private life, and tell what we *now* know about him, it would indeed be a disgusting picture we should exhibit. . . . It is not easy for those who *read only* to conceive how much low pride, how much cold selfishness, how much unmanly cruelty are consistent with the laws of this "universal" and "lawless" love.'

Immorality apart, the reviewers appear to have been totally unable to comprehend Shelley's poetry, the beauties of which seemed to them but the tricks of a 'poetical harlequin.' In the critique on 'Prometheus Unbound' and other poems that appeared in the 'Quarterly' in 1821, the writer complains that the predominating characteristic of Mr. Shelley's poetry is its frequent and total want of meaning, and declares his inability to discover the 'object' of the poem called 'A Sensitive Plant.' He is astonished at the fact that such a volume should meet with readers and admirers, until he recollects the numerous congregations which the incoherencies of the itinerant Methodist preacher attract, and concludes: 'Poetical power can only be shown by writing good poetry, and this Mr. Shelley has not yet done. . . . Take away from him the unintelligible, the confused, the incoherent, the bombastic, the affected, the extravagant, the hideously gorgeous, and "Prometheus" and the poems which accompany it will sink at once into nothingness.'

Jeffrey, in a review of Mrs. Hemans's poems in October 1829, gives the following account of the depressing prospects, as far as their hopes of immortality were concerned, of the great poets of his own times: 'The tuneful quartos of Southey are already little

better than lumber; and the rich melodies of Keats and Shelley, and the fantastical emphasis of Wordsworth, and the plebeian pathos of Crabbe, are melting fast from the field of vision. The novels of Scott have put out his poetry. Even the splendid strains of Moore are fading into distance and dimness, except where they have been married to immortal music; and the blazing star of Byron himself is receding from its place of pride.' The two poets who, in Jeffrey's opinion, showed the least sign of decay were the conventional Rogers and the inoffensive Campbell.

Tennyson's volume of poems which appeared in 1833 met with the usual reception from the critics, whose custom it was to 'heave half a brick' at the poetical stranger. The 'Quarterly,' incorrigible as ever, though professing to be warned by former mishaps, begins in a tone of laboured sarcasm: 'We gladly seize the opportunity of introducing to the notice of our more sequestered readers a prodigy of genius—another and a brighter star of that galaxy or milky way of poetry, of which the lamented Keats was the harbinger; and let us take this occasion to sing our palinode on the subject of "Endymion." We certainly did not discover in that poem the same degree of merit that its more clear-sighted and prophetic admirers did. . . . Warned by our former mishaps, wiser by experience, and improved, we hope, in taste, we have to offer to Mr. Tennyson our tribute of unmingled praise.' This tribute consists of several pages of critical horseplay at the expense of such poems as the 'Hesperides,' 'Enone,' and the 'Dream of Fair Women.'

One or two brilliant specimens of the 'old humour' which are contained in this article deserve to be rescued from oblivion, and held up for the edification of those new humorists of whom we are apt to speak so slightly. For example, of the lines in the 'Hesperides'—

All is mute
As the snow-field on mountain peaks,
As the sand-field at the mountain foot—

the critic observes: 'How admirably do these lines describe the peculiarities of this charmed neighbourhood—fields of snow, so talkative when they happen to lie at the foot of the mountains, are quite out of breath when they get to the top, and the sand, so noisy on the summit of a hill, is dumb at its foot.' Again, upon Iphigenia's lines in the 'Dream of Fair Women'—

One drew a sharp knife through my tender throat,
Slowly—and nothing more,

the critical comment is 'What touching simplicity! What pathetic resignation—he cut my throat—*nothing more!* One might indeed ask "what *more*" she would have.'

In 'Blackwood' Christopher North began his review of the same volume in a high state of irritation against 'Alfred,' who had lately been the subject of a eulogistic article in the 'Westminster Review,' and who was further supposed to be the pet of a 'Cockney coterie.' The amenities exchanged between the critics of rival reviews in the days when William the Fourth was king may possibly have been equalled, but certainly have never been surpassed, by the exponents of the revolver and bowie-knife journalism of the Wild West. The praise bestowed upon Tennyson's Merman and Mermaidens in the 'Westminster' is described in 'Blackwood' as a perfect specimen of the 'super-hyperbolical ultra-extravagance of outrageous Cockney eulogistic foolishness . . . the purest mere matter of moonshine ever mouthed by an idiot-lunatic—slavering in the palsied dotage of the extremest superannuation ever inflicted on a being—long ago, perhaps, in some slight respects and low degrees human, but now sensibly and audibly reduced below the level of the Pongos.' The 'idiot-lunatic' who mouthed this 'purest mere matter of moonshine' was no less a person than John Stuart Mill, who, despite his logical and utilitarian mind, was one of the first to understand and appreciate Tennyson.

Glorious Christopher proved himself no prophet when he said, 'Should he persist in writing thus to the end of the Dean and Chapter, Alfred Tennyson may have a niche in the "Westminster Review," but never in Westminster Abbey.' Although Professor Wilson recovered his temper and, to some extent, his discrimination at the end of the article, and declared the new poet to be a youth of high promise, we are inclined to agree with the sentiment of the lines addressed by Tennyson to the reviewer on the subject of his mingled blame and praise:—

When I learnt from whom it came
I forgave you all the blame,
Musty Christopher.
I could *not* forgive the praise,
Fusty Christopher.

The foregoing extracts yield abundant proof that if the greatest poets of the century had been so weak or so diffident as to abide by the decision of the reviewers, they would either have

ceased to write after their first attempt, or else would only have continued to write in accordance with the rules laid down by the 'Edinburgh' and the 'Quarterly.' But, fortunately, genius, like murder, will out, and not all the 'slating' of all the critics can silence it, or turn it into conventional channels. Such modern poets as have not yet been 'discovered' may find solace in these specimens of the old criticism, and soothe their wounded vanity with the reflection that the first dawn of poetical genius has seldom been apparent to the eye of the reviewer, and that their own merits, like those of Keats and Shelley, may be above and beyond the comprehension of contemporary criticism.

MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

THE saying that speech was given to us to conceal our thoughts has been attributed to many men. Talleyrand, as is only natural, is often credited with it, and whether he said it or not, he certainly acted upon it; but, long before the Bishop of Autun learned to practise the art of tergiversation, Oliver Goldsmith had written that 'the true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to conceal them;' and earlier still Samuel Butler had said, in his satirical character of a 'Modern Politician'—a character hardly yet out of date—'He who does not make his words rather serve to conceal, than discover the sense of his heart, deserves to have it pulled out, like a traitor's, and shewn publicly to the rabble.' It is evident that the idea was no novelty, but was common to many writers, although it was not always so ferociously expressed as by the author of 'Hudibras.' But, apart from the intentional use of speech to conceal thought, the saying is always receiving illustration from the endless misunderstandings that arise from the ignorant use, or rather misuse, of words.

Many instances of a ludicrous meaning being conveyed, entirely different from that intended, by the use of wrong words or the wrong arrangement of phrases, may be observed in public notices. It is by no means necessary to go to Swiss hotels or foreign health-resorts to find choice specimens of English 'as she is wrote.' The notice, 'Any one trespassing on these grounds, without permission, will be prosecuted,' was posted up in Ireland, and on that ground may perhaps be excused; but the following intimation, which appeared some years ago at an English watering-place, was really alarming: 'Visitors are cautioned against bathing within a hundred yards of this spot, several persons having been drowned here lately by order of the authorities.' An Irish tramway exhibits the misleading warning: 'It is dangerous to walk on the line by order of the directors.' A tricky sprite seems to be ever at the elbow of the framer of warning and threatening notices. The following specimen was to be seen by the side of the high road near Canterbury a year or two ago—it is probably still there: 'Traction-engines and other persons taking water from this pond will be prosecuted.'

Even churches are not always free from slips of this kind, or, at least, from the use of words capable of a very different interpretation from that intended. What can be thought of this awful suggestion which appears on the book-ledges of a suburban church: 'All kneelers should be hung up at the end of the service'? There is some saving grace in the 'should be,' for the position of *sus. per col.*, it is clear, is not compulsory for all worshippers; but would not all chance of misunderstanding, all opportunity for cavil have been avoided, if the churchwardens—or whatever officials were responsible for the announcement—had been content to use the good old-fashioned word 'hassock' instead of the new-fangled 'kneeler'?

Canon Taylor informed the world not long ago that at Scalby, near Scarborough, there is this curious notice: 'Stick no bills. One pound reward if found out.' The learned and reverend gentleman proceeded to point out that the question arises, Who can claim the reward? Can it be claimed (1) by a person who sticks bills; (2) by a person who sticks no bills; (3) or by the person who finds another person out in the act of not sticking bills? The canon was inclined to favour the last solution, but owned that it admitted of argument. It is certainly a case of language being used to conceal the real intentions of the framer of the notice. The problem is interesting, and may be commended to the careful consideration of the dialectically minded. Debating societies, please note.

Shop-windows form another happy hunting-ground for curiously worded announcements. 'Hair cut while you wait' in a barber's window is absurd enough, but it is not double-edged like some other examples of shop aids to misunderstanding. The tradesman who put up a bill stating that he had vacancies for two apprentices, who would be treated as one of the family, did not reflect upon the problem he was putting before the world. The two apprentices might share the rations of one, and each be content (or not) with short commons, but clothing would present an insuperable difficulty, for by no ingenuity could one pair of trousers be made to cover four legs. Still more liable to misunderstanding are such interesting adornments of shop-windows as, 'Superior butter: one shilling per lb. Nobody can touch it'—probably not!—or the tempting notice of the dealer in cheap shirts, 'They won't last long at this price!' Worse still was the admonition which appeared in the window of a cheap restaurant: 'Dine here,

and you will never dine anywhere else.' The viands of this restaurateur must have been almost as deadly and unerring in their effect as that whisky known in the Western States as 'forty rod,' because that was the distance beyond which no drinker could walk after its imbibition.

A similarity of sound as well as of appearance often leads to mistakes. It is related of a certain queen of Denmark who was visiting Iceland that in the course of some compliments to the bishop, who had been assiduous in showing her all that was to be seen, she asked him how many children he had. The Danish word for 'children' happens to resemble very closely in sound the Icelandic word for 'sheep,' and the good bishop, confusing the two, replied: 'Two hundred.' 'Two hundred children!' cried the queen. 'How can you possibly maintain such a number?' 'Easily enough, please your Majesty,' returned the complacent prelate. 'In the summer I turn them out upon the hills to graze, and when winter comes I kill and eat them!'

The most straightforward sentences, or the plainest question, may be misunderstood, either purposely or through ignorance. It was recently related of Mr. Toole that not long ago he entered a dairy and solemnly remarked to the shopman: 'I will take a boy,' with a glance at the shelves. 'A boy, sir?' asked the puzzled dairyman. 'Yes, or a girl,' replied Toole. The man never doubted but his visitor was a lunatic, and said mildly: 'Pardon me, this is a milk shop.' 'Come outside,' said the joker, and taking the dairyman by the arm led him out of the shop and pointed to the sign. 'I'll take a boy and a girl,' he solemnly repeated. 'Read what your notice states: "Families supplied in any quantity!"' Ignorance only is at the root of misunderstandings such as the reply of a witness in a Midland police court, who being asked: 'Are you an agnostic?' replied 'No, your worship, a shoemaker!' Another witness at a county court was asked lately, as he appeared in the box, 'Have you sworn?' and replied, 'Well, not much, but I *have* sworn a little this morning;' an answer that affected even the gravity of the judge. But this swearer was outdone by an Irishman who had to appear as a witness. 'What did you do, Pat?' asked a friend afterwards. 'They says, "Swear!" and I says "...," and begorra they turned me out!'

Perhaps ignorance had not so much to do with the answer of the individual enjoying a standing seat at the theatre, who on

being sarcastically asked by a gentleman, whose view he obstructed, whether he was aware that he was opaque, denied the charge, and said he was O'Brien! But ignorance, pure and simple, will account for many absurdities. Many years ago a certain magnate in the West of England—doctor of divinity and chairman of the quarter sessions—was also an enthusiastic geologist. One day a farmer, who had seen him presiding on the bench, was riding along a quiet road, when he discovered the magistrate seated by the roadside on a heap of stones, which he was engaged in breaking with a small hammer in the course of a hunt for fossils. The farmer reined up his horse and for a minute gazed open-mouthed; then, shaking his head over the changeableness of all things human, exclaimed in tones of the deepest commiseration: 'What, doctor! be *you* come to this a'ready?'

The late Duke of Rutland, walking one morning in the grounds of Belvoir, met a gamekeeper's little girl. 'Well, little one,' he said, 'and what do you call yourself?' 'For what we are about to receive may the Lord make us truly thankful,' was the child's astonishing reply; but its irrelevance was explained when it was discovered that the little one's mother had said to her: 'If you meet the duke, be quite sure to say "Your Grace."' An Irish member of Parliament, it is related, was giving a small dinner-party, at which one of the guests was a priest of no small consideration among the electors of the member's constituency. A goose happened to make its appearance upon the table, and some one asked the priest what was Latin for goose. The reverend gentleman, whose scholarship was rather shaky, hesitated, and the host, jealous of his guest's reputation, whispered, '*Anser.*' The ecclesiastic got very red in the face and fidgeted in his chair, but did not speak; whereupon the anxious host, with the best intentions in the world, again whispered, rather more loudly, '*Anser, anser.*' The priest turned upon him in undisguised anger and roared, 'Answer yourself, sorr!'

An old West-country cottager, speaking of her son, a sailor, to a district visitor, said: 'Ah, ma'am, my son that has been up to the North Pole, he tells me some things that I really can't believe, though he is my son. He tells me, ma'am, that he has seen with his own eyes "ice-bugs" as big as a church!' All the cleanly instincts of the old lady were in revolt at the bare possibility of such monstrosities. Ignorance, of course, is the explanation of the innumerable misunderstandings which lead children

to give such astonishing answers. A teacher, the other day, wrote 'Bird's-nest' on the blackboard, and, pointing to the hyphen, asked, 'What is that for?' The silence which followed this poser was broken by a youthful Pat, who brilliantly explained: 'Plaze, ma'am, for the bird to roosht on!' But the humour of schoolboy and schoolgirl answers is a very wide field, which of late years has been worked pretty freely.

Misunderstandings of another class arise from purposely arranged or accidental double meanings. In Moore's 'Diary' there is a story of a man selling a horse. The would-be purchaser, anxious about his leaping powers, asks: 'Would he take timber?' 'He'd jump over your head,' replies the seller; 'I don't know what you call *that*.' A less intentional opening for misunderstanding was made by the lady who, having been reading one of Mr. Augustus Hare's guide-books, left it in her hotel bedroom, and did not remember it until just as she was leaving the hostelry, when she astonished the attendant landlord and servants by calling loudly to her maid: 'Oh, Eliza, Eliza, I've left my Hare on the dressing-table!' In a recently published volume of essays, of unusual brightness and interest, Sir Herbert Maxwell tells a tale of a former Earl of Mayo, who had imported some emus, and, going to London, left strict orders that he was to be informed when they began to lay. In a few days he received the following letter from his bailiff: 'My Lord,—I have the honour to inform your lordship that one of the emus has begun to lay. In the absence of your lordship, I have put the eggs under the biggest goose we have.'

The most civilly worded remark and the plainest question may be alike misunderstood, either innocently or by humorous malice. Some months ago a new story of Miss Edgeworth appeared in print. She and her sister had been staying with Lord Lansdowne at Bowood, and on the morning of their departure, as their host was handing the novelist to the carriage, he said, very courteously: 'I am sorry you cannot stay longer,' to which came the unlooked-for retort, 'Oh, but, my lord, we can!' There was only one course open. The trunks were taken down, the carriage sent away, and, to the consternation of their hosts, the ladies re-entered the house. Of intentional misunderstanding expressed in the most unexpected answers there are many examples. It is impossible in this connection to forget Charles Lamb's encounter with the farmer whom he happened to meet in a stage-coach, and

who bored him with talk about the crops and other agricultural matters on which Lamb was more profoundly ignorant than most men. The last straw came in the shape of an inquiry by the farmer as to what he thought of the prospects of the turnip crop. 'I believe,' said the essayist, 'that de-p-pends upon the legs of b-b-boiled mutton!' and thereafter the conversation flagged. Lamb chuckled over this performance in letters to more than one correspondent. Almost as good was Dean Hole's reply to his talkative fellow-passenger by rail, who asked, 'What comes after 'Itchin?' '*Scratching!*' was the answer, which also had the effect of damming the flow of troublesome talk. Both replies were as unlooked for as Johnson's famous retort to Boswell's apology for his nationality.

A visitor to Niagara once got a reply which was by no means the answer he expected. He was watching the car start which is raised or lowered on the inclined plane by steam power, but, not liking the look of the track, did not go down himself. After the car had started, he turned to the man in charge and said: 'Suppose, sir, that the rope should break?' The visitor was thinking of possible danger; the man only thought of business, and replied, 'Oh, they all paid before they went,' which was not quite so soothing an answer as the querist might naturally have expected. But the consideration of unexpected replies opens up another wide field of study for those interested in the curious and often tortuous evolutions—gyrations they might almost be called—of the human mind. Language is used by very few people as a weapon of precision. In the hands of most talkers and some writers its aim and carrying power are as little to be depended upon as those of an ancient blunderbuss; and when such an uncertain weapon is used by the slightly trained, or by those who have had no training at all, in the choice of words, it is hardly to be wondered at that misunderstandings abound.

IN THE TRACK OF THE WANDERING JEW.

What hope is ours—what hope ! To find no mercy
After much war, and many travails done ?

‘WELL, somebody must go ; that is certain.’

And more than one man looked at me. It was not because I could possibly be that somebody, although I was young enough and of little enough consequence. But Fortune had been busy with me. She had knocked all the interest out of my life, and then she had proceeded to shower her fickle favours upon me. I was by way of becoming a success in that line of life wherein I had been cast. I had been mentioned in despatches, and somehow the bullets had passed by on the other side. Her gracious Majesty had written to me twice as her dearly beloved Thomas, and I was well up in my profession.

In those days things were differently done in India. There was less telegraphing here and there for instructions. There was more action and less talk. The native gentleman did not sit on a jury then.

‘Yes,’ said young Martello, ‘somebody must go. Question is—who?’

And they looked at me again.

‘There be those in high places,’ I said, ‘who shall decide.’

They laughed and made no answer. They were pleased to think that I should have to decide which doctor should go to Capoo, where a sickness unknown and incomprehensible had broken out. It was true that I was senior surgeon of the division ; indeed, I was surgeon-major of a tract of country as big as Scotland. It is India now, but in the days of which I write the question had not been settled with a turbulent native prince. We were, in fact, settling that question.

Capoo was right in the heart of the new country, while we were in occupation of a border town. Behind us lay India ; in front, the Unknown. The garrison of Capoo was small and self-important, but sickness made itself conspicuous among its members. Their doctor—poor young Barber—died, and the self-importance of the Capoo garrison oozed out of their finger-ends. They sent down

post-haste to us for help, and a special letter addressed to me detailed symptoms of no human malady.

I had two men under me. The question seemed simple enough. One of them would have to go. As to which one there was really no doubt whatever. The duty fell upon Thurkow. Thurkow was junior. This might prove to be Thurkow's opportunity, or—the other thing.

We all knew that he would be willing enough to go; nay, he would be eager. But Thurkow's father was in command, which made all the difference.

While we were thinking over these things an orderly appeared at the mess-room door.

'Brigadier would like to see you, sir,' he said to me. And I had to throw away the better half of a first-class manilla.

The brigadier's quarters were across a square in the centre of a long rambling palace, for which a handsome rent was duly paid. We were not making war. On the contrary, we were forcing peace down the throat of the native prince on the point of a sword.

Everything was upon a friendly footing. We were not an invading force. Oh, no! we were only the escort of a political officer. We had been quartered in this border town for more than a year, and the senior officers' lady-wives had brought their *lares* and *penates* in three bullock-carts a-piece.

I suppose we were objects of envy. We had all the excitement of novelty without any of the penalties of active warfare. We were strong enough to make an awful example of the whole Principality at a day's notice, and the Principality knew it, which kept bazaar prices down and made the coloured brother remember the hue of his cheek.

In the palace there were half a dozen officers' quarters, and these had been apportioned to the married; consequently the palace had that air of homeliness which is supposed to be lacking in the quarters of single men.

As I was crossing the square I heard some one running after me, and turning I faced Fitz. Fitz Marner—usually called Fitz—was my second in command and two years my junior. He was quite a different sort of man from myself, and, if I may say so, a much better man. However, I am not going to talk about myself more than I can help this time. Some day I shall, and then I shall have a portrait on the cover. This is an age of portraits. But some day the British public will wake up and will refuse to read the works

of a smug-faced man in spectacles who tries to make them believe that he is doughty, fearless, and beloved of beautiful damsels. The bookstalls are full to-day of works written in the first person singular, and relating deeds of the utmost daring; while on the cover is a portrait of the author—the aforesaid smug man in spectacles—who has not the good sense to suppress himself.

Fitz was tall and lithe. He had a large brown moustache and pleasantly thoughtful eyes. His smile was the kindest I have ever met. Moreover, a modester man than Fitz never breathed. He had a way of carrying his chin rather low, so that when he looked at one he had to raise his eyes, which imparted a pleasing suggestion of attention to his face. It always seemed to me that Fitz listened more carefully to what was said to him than other men are in the habit of doing.

‘Say, doctor,’ he said, looking up at me in his peculiar thoughtful way, ‘give me a chance.’

I knew what he meant. He wanted me to send him to a certain death instead of young Thurkow. Those little missions to that bourne from whence no traveller returns are all in the work of a soldier’s life, and we two were soldiers, although ours was the task of repairing instead of doing the damage. Every soldier-man and most civilians know that it is sometimes the duty of a red-coat to go and get killed without pausing to ask whether it be expedient or not. One aide-de-camp may be sent on a mad attempt to get through the enemy’s lines, while his colleague rides quietly to the rear with a despatch inside his tunic, the delivery of which to the commander-in-chief will ensure promotion. And in view of this the wholesome law of seniority was invented. The missions come in rotation, and according to seniority the men step forward.

Fitz Marner’s place was at my side, where, by the way, I never want a better man, for his will was iron and he had no nerves whatever. Capoo, the stricken, was calling for help. Fitz and I knew more about cholera than we cared to discuss just then. Some one must go up to Capoo to fight a hopeless fight and die. And old Fitz—God bless him!—was asking to go.

In reply I laughed.

‘Not if I can help it. The fortune of war is the same for all.’

Fitz tugged at his moustache and looked gravely at me.

‘It is hard on the old man,’ he said. ‘It is more than you can expect.’

‘Much,’ I answered. ‘I gave up expecting justice some years

ago. I am sorry for the brigadier, of course. He committed the terrible mistake of getting his son into his own brigade, and this is the result. All that he does to-night he does on his own responsibility. I am not inclined to help him. If it had been you, I should not have moved an inch—you know that.'

He turned half away, looking up speculatively at the yellow Indian moon.

'Yes,' he muttered, 'I know that.'

And without another word he went back to the mess-room.

I went on and entered the palace. To reach the brigadier's quarters I had to pass down the whole length of the building, and I was not in the least surprised to see Elsie Matheson waiting for me in one of the passage-like ante-rooms. Elsie Matheson was bound to come into this matter sooner or later—I knew that; but I did not quite know in what capacity her advent might be expected.

'What is this news from Capoo?' she asked, without attempting to disguise her anxiety. Her father, assistant political officer in this affair, was not at Capoo or near there. He was upstairs playing a rubber.

'Bad,' I answered.

She winced, but turned no paler. Women and horses are always surprising me, and they never surprise me more than when in danger. Elsie Matheson was by no means a masculine young person. Had she been so I should not have troubled to mention her. For me, men cannot be too manly, nor women too womanly.

'What is the illness they have?' she asked.

'I really cannot tell you, Elsie,' I answered. 'Old Simpson has written me a long letter—he always had a fancy for symptoms, you know—but I can make nothing of it. The symptoms he describes are quite impossible. They are too scientific for me.'

'You know it is cholera,' she snapped out with a strange little break in her voice which I did not like, for I was very fond of this girl.

'Perhaps it is,' I answered.

She gave a funny little helpless look round her as if she wanted something to lean against.

'And who will go?' she asked. She was watching me keenly.

'Ah—that does not rest with me.'

'And if it did?'

'I should go myself.'

Her face lighted up suddenly. She had not thought of that. I bore her no ill-feeling, however. I did not expect her to love me.

'But they cannot spare you,' she was kind enough to say.

'Everybody can always be spared—with alacrity,' I answered; 'but it is not a question of that. It is a question of routine. One of the others will have to go.'

'Which one?' she asked with a suddenly assumed indifference.

It was precisely the question in my own mind, but relative to a very different matter. If the decision rested with Miss Matheson, which of these two men would she send to Capoo? Perhaps I looked rather too keenly into her face, for she turned suddenly away and drew the gauzy wrap she had thrown over her evening dress more closely round her throat, for the passages were cold.

'That does not rest with me,' I repeated, and I went on towards the brigadier's quarters, leaving her—a white shadow in the dimly lighted passage.

I found the chief at his own dinner-table with an untouched glass of wine before him.

'This is a bad business,' he said, looking at me with haggard eyes. I had never quite realised before what an old man he was. His trim beard and moustache had been white for years, but he had always been a hale man up to his work—a fine soldier but not a great leader. There was a vein of indolence in Brigadier-General Thurkow's nature which had the same effect on his career as that caused by barnacles round a ship's keel. This inherent indolence was a steady drag on the man's life. Only one interest thoroughly aroused him—only one train of thought received the full gift of his mind. This one absorbing interest was his son Charlie, and it says much for Charlie Thurkow that we did not hate him.

The brigadier had lost his wife years before. All that belonged to ancient history—to the old Company days before our time. To say that he was absorbed in his son is to state the case in the mildest imaginable form. The love in this old man's heart for his reckless, happy-souled offspring was of that higher order which stops at nothing. There is a love that worketh wonders, and the same love can make a villain of an honest man.

I looked at old Thurkow, sitting white-lipped behind the decanter, and I knew that there was villainy in his upright, honest heart. He scarcely met my eyes. He moved uneasily in his chair. All through a long life this man had carried nobly the noblest name that can be given to any—the name of gentleman. No

great soldier, but a man of dauntless courage. No strategist, but a leader who could be trusted with his country's honour. Upright, honourable, honest, brave—and it had come to this. It had come to his sitting shamefaced before a poor unknown sawbones—not daring to look him in the face.

His duty was plain enough. Charlie Thurkow's turn had come. Charlie Thurkow must be sent to Capoo—by his father's orders. But the old man—the soldier who had never turned his back on danger—could not do it.

We were old friends, this man and I. I owed him much. He had made my career, and I am afraid I had been his accomplice more than once. But we had never wronged any other man. Fitz had aided and abetted more than once. It had been an understood thing between Fitz and myself that the winds of our service were to be tempered to Charlie Thurkow, and I imagine we had succeeded in withholding the fact from his knowledge. Like most spoilt sons Charlie was a little selfish, with that convenient blindness which does not perceive how much dirty work is done by others.

But we had never deceived the brigadier. He was not easily deceived in those matters which concerned his son. I knew the old man very well, and for years I had been content to sit by the hour together and talk with him of Charlie. To tell the honest truth, Master Charlie was a very ordinary young man. I take it that a solution of all that was best in five Charles Thurkows would make up one Fitz Marner.

There was something horribly pathetic in the blindness of this usually keen old man on this one point. He would sit there stiffly behind the decanter fingering his wine-glass and make statements about Charlie which would have made me blush had that accomplishment not belonged to my past. A certain cheery impertinence which characterised Charlie was fondly set down as *savoir-faire* and dash. A cheap wit was held to be brilliancy and conversational finish. And somehow we had all fallen into the way of humouring the brigadier. I never told him, for instance, that his son was a very second-rate doctor and a nervous operator. I never hinted that many of the cures which had been placed to his credit were the work of Fitz—that the men had no confidence in Charlie, and that they were somewhat justified in their opinion.

'This is a bad business,' repeated the brigadier, looking hard at the despatch that lay on the table before him.

'Yes,' I answered.

He tossed the paper towards me and pointed to a chair.

'Sit down!' he said sharply. 'Have you had any report from poor Barber?'

In response I handed him the beginning of an official report. I say the beginning, because it consisted of four lines only. It was in Barber's handwriting, and it broke off suddenly in the middle of a word before it began to tell me anything. In its way it was a tragedy. Death had called for Barber while he was wondering how to spell 'nauseous.' I also gave him Colonel Simpson's letter, which he read carefully.

'What is it?' he asked suddenly, as he laid the papers aside.

'Officially—I don't know.'

'And unofficially?'

'I am afraid it is cholera.'

The brigadier raised his glass of claret a few inches from the table, but his hand was too unsteady, and he set the glass down again untouched. I was helplessly sorry for him. There was something abject and humiliating in his averted gaze. Beneath his white moustache his lips were twitching nervously.

For a few moments there was silence, and I dreaded his next words. I was trembling for his manhood.

'I suppose something must be done for them,' he said at length hoarsely, and it was hard to believe that the voice was the voice of our leader—a man dreaded in warfare, respected in peace.

'Yes,' I answered uncompromisingly.

'Some one must go to them . . .'

'Yes.'

Again there was that horrid silence broken only by the tramp of the sentinel outside the glassless windows.

'Who?' asked the brigadier in little more than a whisper.

I suppose he expected it of me—I suppose he knew that even for him, even in mercy to an old man whose only joy in life trembled at that moment in the balance, I could not perpetrate a cruel injustice.

'It devolves on Charlie,' I answered.

He gave one quick glance beneath his lashes and again lowered his eyes. I heard a long gasping sound as if he found difficulty in breathing. He sat upright, and threw back his shoulders with a pitiable effort to be strong.

'Is he up to the work?' he asked quietly.

'I cannot conscientiously say that he is not.'

'D——n it, man,' he burst out suddenly, 'is there no way out of it?'

'Yes—one way!'

'What is it?'

'I will go.'

'That is impossible,' he answered with a sublime unconsciousness of his own huge selfishness which almost made me laugh. This man would have asked nothing for himself. For his son he had no shame in asking all. He would have accepted my offer, I could see that, had it been possible.

At this moment the door opened and Charlie Thurkow came in. His eyes were bright with excitement, and he glanced at us both quickly. He was quite well aware of his father's weakness in regard to himself, and I am afraid he sometimes took advantage of it. He often ignored discipline entirely, as he did in coming into the room at that moment.

I suppose there is in every one a sense of justice which accounts for the subtle annoyance caused by the devotion of parents and others—a devotion which has not the good sense to hide itself. There are few things more annoying than an exhibition of unjust love. I rose at once. The coming interview would be either painful or humiliating, and I preferred not to assist at it.

As I went down the dark passages a man in a staff uniform, wearing spurs, clanked past me. I did not know until later that it was Fitz, for I could not see his face.

I went back to my quarters, and was busy for some time with certain technicalities of my trade which are not worth detailing here. While I and my two dispensers were still measuring out and mixing drugs Fitz came to us.

'I am going to Capoo,' he said quietly.

In his silent, quick way he was taking in all that we were doing. We were packing medical stores for Capoo. I did not answer him, but waited for further details. We could not speak openly before the two assistants at that moment, and somehow we never spoke about it at all. I glanced up at him. His face was pale beneath the sunburn. There was a drawn look just above his moustache, as if his lips were held tightly.

'I volunteered,' he said, 'and the brigadier accepted my offer.'

Whenever the word 'duty' is mentioned, I think of Fitz to this day.

I said nothing, but went on with my work. The whole business was too disgusting, too selfish, too unjust, to bear speaking of.

I had long known that Fitz loved Elsie Matheson. In my feeble way, according to my scanty opportunity, I had endeavoured to assist him. But her name had never been mentioned between us except carelessly in passing conversation. I knew no details. I did not even know whether Elsie knew of his love; but it was exceedingly likely that if she did he had not told her. As to her feelings I was ignorant. She loved somebody, that much I knew. One can generally tell that. One sees it in a woman's eyes. But it is one thing to know that a woman loves, and quite another to find out whom she loves. I have tried in vain more than once. I once thought that I was the favoured person—not with Elsie, with quite another woman—but I was mistaken. I only know that those women who have that in their eyes which I have learnt to recognise are better women than those who lack it.

Fitz was the first to speak.

'Don't put all of that into one case,' he said to one of the dispensers, indicating a row of bottles that stood on the floor. 'Divide the different drugs over the cases, so that one or two of them can be lost without doing much harm.'

His voice was quite calm and practical.

'When do you go?' I asked curtly. I was rather afraid of trusting my voice too long, for Fitz was one of the few men who have really entered into my life sufficiently to leave a blank space behind them. I have been a rolling stone, and what little moss I ever gathered soon got knocked off, but it left scars. Fitz left a scar.

'My orders are to start to-night—with one trooper,' he answered.

'What time?'

'In half an hour.'

'I will ride with you a few miles,' I said.

He turned and went to his quarters, which were next to mine. I was still at work when Charlie Thurkow came in. He had changed his dress clothes for an old working suit. I was working in my evening dress—a subtle difference.

'Do you want any help?' he asked. I could hear a grievance in his voice.

'Of course; get on packing that case; plenty of straw between the bottles.'

He obeyed me, working slowly, badly, without concentration, as he always did.

'It's a beastly shame, isn't it?' he muttered presently.

'Yes,' I answered, 'it is.'

I suppose he did not detect the sarcasm.

'Makes me look a fool,' he said heatedly. 'Why couldn't the governor let me go and take my chance?'

The answer to this question being beyond my ken, I kept a discreet silence. Giving him further instructions, I presently left my junior to complete the task of packing up the necessary medicaments for Capoo.

In less than half an hour Fitz and I mounted our horses. A few of the fellows came out of the mess-room, cigar in mouth, to say good-bye to Fitz. One or two of them called out 'Good luck' as we left them. Each wish was followed by a little laugh, as if the wisher was ashamed of showing even so minute an emotion. It was, after all, all in the way of our business. Many a time Fitz and I had stood idle while these same men rode out to face death. It was Fitz's turn now—that was all.

The Sikh trooper was waiting for us in the middle of the square—in the moonlight—a grand picturesque figure. A long-faced, silent man, with deep eyes and a grizzled moustache. He wheeled his horse, and dropped ten paces in our rear.

In the course of a varied experience Fitz and I had learnt to ride hard. We rode hard that night beneath the yellow moon, through the sleeping, odorous country. We both knew too well that cholera under canvas is like a fire in a timber-yard. You may pump your drugs upon it, but without avail unless the pumping be scientific. Fitz represented science. Every moment meant a man's life. Our horses soon settled into their stride with a pleasant creaking sound of warm leather and willing lungs.

The moon was above and behind us; we each had a galloping shadow beneath our horse's forefeet. It was a sandy country, and the hoofs only produced a dull thud. There was something exhilarating in the speed—in the shimmering Indian atmosphere. A sense of envy came over me, and I dreaded the moment when I should have to turn and ride soberly home, leaving Fitz to complete his forty-five miles before daylight.

We were riding our chargers. They had naturally fallen into step, and bounded beneath us with a regular, mechanical rhythm. Both alike had their heads down, their shoulders forward, with

that intelligent desire to do well which draws a man's heart towards a horse in preference to any other animal. I looked sideways at Fitz, and waited for him to speak. But he was staring straight in front of him, and seemed lost in thought.

'You know,' I said at length, 'you have done that old man an ill-turn. Even if you come back he will never forgive himself. He will never look either of us straight in the face again.'

'Can't help that,' replied Fitz. 'The thing——' he paused, as if choosing his words. 'If,' he went on rather quickly, 'the worst comes to the worst, don't let people—*any one*—think that I did it because I didn't care, because I set no value on my life. The thing was forced upon me. I was asked to volunteer for it.'

'All right,' I answered, rather absent-mindedly perhaps. I was wondering who 'any one' might be, and also who had asked him to throw away his life. The latter might, of course, be the brigadier. Surely it could not have been Elsie. But, as I said before, I always was uncertain about women.

I did not say anything about hoping for the best. Fitz and I had left all that nonsense behind us years before. We did our business amidst battle, murder, and sudden death. Perhaps we were callous, perhaps we had only learnt to value the thing at its true worth, and did not set much fear on death.

And then, I must ask you to believe, we fell to talking 'shop.' I knew a little more about cholera than did Fitz, and we got quite interested in our conversation. It is, I have found, only in books that men use the last moment to advantage. Death has been my road-fellow all through life, and no man has yet died in my arms saying quite the right thing. Some of them made a joke, others were merely commonplace, as all men really are whether living or dying.

When the time came for me to turn back, Fitz had said nothing fit for post-mortem reproduction. We had talked unmitigated 'shop,' except the few odd observations I have set down.

We shook hands, and I turned back at once. As I galloped I looked back, and in the light of the great tropical moon I saw Fitz sitting forward in his saddle as the horse rose to the slope of a hill, galloping away into the night, into the unknown, on his mission of mercy. At his heels rode the Sikh, enormous, silent, soldierly.

During my steady run home I thought of those things con-

cerning my craft which required immediate consideration. Would it be necessary to send down to India for help? Cholera at Capoo might mean cholera everywhere in this new unknown country. What about the women and children? The Wandering Jew was abroad; would he wander in our direction, with the legendary curse following on his heels? Was I destined to meet this dread foe a third time? I admit that the very thought caused a lump to rise in my throat. For I love Thomas Atkins. He is manly and honest according to his lights. It does not hurt me very much to see him with a bullet through his lungs or a sabre cut through the collar-bone down to the same part of his anatomy. But it does hurt me exceedingly to see honest Thomas die between the sheets—the death of any common civilian beggar. Thomas is too good for that.

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning when I rode into the Palace Square. All round I saw the sentinels, their bayonets gleaming in the moonlight. A man was walking backwards and forwards in the middle of the square by himself. When he heard me he came towards me. At first I thought that it was my servant waiting to take the horse, but a moment later I recognised Charlie Thurkow—recognised him by his fair hair, for he was hatless. At the same time my syce roused himself from slumber in the shadow of an arch, and ran forward to my stirrup.

'Come to the hospital!' said Thurkow the moment I alighted. His voice was dull and unnatural. I once heard a man speak in the same voice while collecting his men for a rush which meant certain death. The man was duly killed, and I think he was trembling with fear when he ran to his death.

'What is it?' I asked.

'I don't know.'

We walked—almost ran—to the hospital, a long low building in the palace compound. Charlie Thurkow led the way to a ward which we had never used—a ward I had set apart for infectious cases. A man was dozing in a long chair in the open window. As we entered he rose hastily and brought a lamp. We bent over a bed—the only one occupied. The occupant was a man I did not know. He looked like a Goorkha, and he was dying. In a few moments I knew all that there was to know. I knew that the Wandering Jew had passed our way.

'Yes,' I said, rising from my knees at the bedside; 'we have it.'

Of the days that followed it is not my intention to say much. A woman once told me that I was afraid of nothing. She was mistaken. If she chance to read this and recognise it, I hope she will believe the assertion: I am, and always have been, afraid of cholera—in India. In Europe it is a different matter. The writing of those days would be unpleasant to me; the reading would be still less pleasant to the reader.

Brigadier-General Thurkow rose to the occasion, as we all expected him to do. It is one thing to send a man to a distant danger, and quite another to go with him into a danger which is close at hand. Charlie Thurkow and I were the only two doctors on the spot, and before help could reach us we should probably all be dead or cured. There was no shirking now. Charlie and I were at work night and day, and in the course of thirty-six hours Charlie got interested in it. He reached the fighting point—that crisis in an epidemic of which doctors can tell—that point where there is a certain glowing sense of battle over each bed—where Death and the doctor see each other face to face—fight hand to hand for the life.

The doctor loses his interest in the patient as a friend or a patient; all his attention is centred on the life as a life, and a point to be scored against the adversary Death.

We had a very bad time for two days. At the end of that time I had officers bearing Her Majesty's commission serving under me as assistant nurses, and then the women came into it. The first to offer herself was the wife of a non-commissioned officer in the Engineers, who had been through Netley. I accepted her. The second woman was Elsie Matheson. I refused point blank.

'Sooner or later,' she said, looking at me steadily with something in her eyes which I could not make out, 'you will have to take me.'

'Does your father know you have come to me?' I retorted.

'Yes; I came with his consent.'

I shook my head and returned to my writing. I was filling in a list of terrific length. She did not go away, but stood in front of me with a certain tranquillity which was unnatural under the circumstances.

'Do you want help?' she asked calmly.

'God knows I do.'

'But not mine——?'

'Not yet, Elsie. I have not got so far as that yet.'

I did not look up, and she stood quite still over me—looking down at me—probably noting that the hair was getting a little thin on the top of my head. This is not a joke. I repeat she was probably noting that. People do note such things at such moments.

'If you do not take me,' she said in a singularly even voice, 'I shall go up to Capoo. Can you not see that that is the only thing that can save me from going to Capoo—or going mad?'

I laid aside my pen, and looked up into her face, which she made no pretence of hiding from me. And I saw that it was as she said.

'You can go to work at once,' I said, 'under Mrs. Martin, in ward number four.'

When she had left me I did not go on filling in the list from the notes in my pocket-book. I fell to wasting time instead. So it *was* Fitz. I was not surprised, but I was very pleased. I was not surprised, because I have usually found that the better sort of woman has as keen a scent for the good men as we have. And I thought of old Fitz—the best man I ever served with—fighting up at Capoo all alone, while I fought down in the valley. There was a certain sense of companionship in the thought, though my knowledge and experience told me that our chances of meeting again were very small indeed.

We had not heard from Capoo. The conclusion was obvious: they had no one to send.

Elsie Matheson soon became a splendid nurse. She was quite fearless—not with dash, but with the steady fearlessness that comes from an ever-present sense of duty, which is the best. She was kind and tender, but she was a little absent. In spirit she was nursing at Capoo; with us she was only in the body.

When Charlie Thurkow heard that she had gone into ward number four, he displayed a sudden, singular anger.

'It's not fit for her,' he said. 'How could you do it?'

And I noticed that so far as lay in his power he kept the worst cases away from number four.

It occasionally happens in life that duty is synonymous with inclination; not often, of course, but occasionally. I twisted inclination round into duty, and put Elsie to night work, while Charlie Thurkow kept the day watches. I myself was forced to keep both as best I could.

Whenever I went into number four ward at night before (save the mark) going to bed, I found Elsie Matheson waiting for me. It must be remembered that she was quite cut off from the little world that surrounded us in the palace. She had no means of obtaining news. Her only link with the outer universe was an occasional patient brought in more dead than alive, and too much occupied with his own affairs to trouble about those of other people.

'Any news?' she would whisper to me as we went round the beds together; and I knew that she meant Capoo. Capoo was all the world for her. It is strange how some little unknown spot on the earth will rise up and come into our lives never to leave the memory again.

'Nothing,' I replied with a melancholy regularity.

Once only she broke through her reserve—through the habit of bearing pain in silence which she had acquired by being so much among dying men.

'Have you no opinion?' she asked with a sharpness in her voice which I forgave as I heard it.

'Upon what subject?'

'Upon . . . the chances.'

I shrugged my shoulders.

'He is a good man—there is no better in India—that is all I can say. Just hold the candle a little closer, will you, please? Thanks—yes—he is quite dead.'

We passed on to the next bed.

'It is both his duty and his inclination to take care of himself,' I said as we went—going back with her in the spirit to Capoo.

'How do you know it is his inclination?' she asked guardedly.

And I knew that I was on the right path. The vague message given to 'any one' by Fitz as he rode by my side that night—only a week before, although it seemed to be months—that message was intended for Elsie. It referred to something that had gone before, of which I had no knowledge.

'Because he told me so,' I answered.

And then we went on with our work. Charlie Thurkow was quite right. I knew that all along. It was not fit for her. Elsie was too young, too gentle and delicate for such a place as ward number four. I make no mention of her beauty, for I took no heed of it then. It was there—but it had nothing to do with this matter. Also I have never seen why women who are less blessed

or cursed by beauty should be less considered in such matters, as they undoubtedly are.

I was up and about all that night. The next morning rose gloomily as if the day was awakening unrefreshed by a feverish sleep. The heat had been intense all night, and we could look for nothing but an intensification of it when the sun rose with a tropical aggressiveness. I wanted to get my reports filled in before lying down to snatch a little rest, and was still at work when Charlie Thurkow came in to relieve me. He looked ghastly, but we all did that, and I took no notice. He took up the ward-sheets and glanced down the columns.

'Wish I had gone to Capoo,' he muttered. 'It couldn't have been worse than this.'

I had finished my writing, and I rose. As I did so Charlie suddenly clapped his hand to his hip.

'I say!' he exclaimed, 'I say.'

He looked at me in a stupid way, and then suddenly he tottered towards me and I caught him.

'Old chap,' he exclaimed thickly, with his face against my shoulder, 'I've got it. Take me to number four.'

He had seen by the list that there was a vacant cot in number four.

I carried him there, stumbling as I went, for I was weak from want of sleep.

Elsie had just gone to her room, and Mrs. Martin was getting the vacant bed ready. I was by that bedside all day. All that I knew I did for Charlie Thurkow. I dosed myself with more than one Indian drug to stimulate the brain—to keep myself up to doing and thinking. This was a white man's life, and God forgive me if I set undue store upon it as compared with the black lives we were losing daily. This was a brain that could think for the rest. There was more than one man's life wrapped up in Charlie Thurkow's. One can never tell. My time might come at any moment, and the help we had sent for could not reach us for another fortnight.

Charlie said nothing. He thanked me at intervals for some little service rendered, and nearly all the time his eyes were fixed upon the clock. He was reckoning with his own life. He did not want to die in the day, but in the night. He was deliberately spinning out his life till the night nurse came on-duty. I suppose that in his superficial, happy-go-lucky way he loved her.

I pulled him through that day, and we managed to refrain

from waking Elsie up. At nightfall she came to her post. When she came into the room I was writing a note to the brigadier. I watched her face as she came towards us. There was only distress upon it—nothing else. Even women—even beautiful women grow callous; thank Heaven! Charlie Thurkow gave a long sigh of relief when she came.

My note was duly sent to the brigadier, and five minutes afterwards I went out on to the verandah to speak to him. I managed to keep him out of the room by a promise that he should be sent for later. I made no pretence about it, and he knew that it was only the question of a few hours when he walked back across the Palace square to his quarters. I came back to the verandah and found Elsie waiting to speak to me.

‘Will he die?’ she asked.

‘Yes.’

‘Quite sure?’

There was a strange glitter in her eyes which I could not understand. ‘Quite,’ I answered, forgetting to be professional.

She looked at me for a moment as if she were about to say something, and then she apparently decided not to say it.

I went towards a long chair which stood on the verandah.

‘I shall lie down here,’ I said, ‘and sleep for an hour.’

‘Yes, do,’ she answered almost gratefully.

‘You will wake me if you want me?’

‘Yes.’

‘Wake me when . . . the change comes.’

‘Yes.’

In a few moments I was asleep. I do not know what woke me up. It seemed to be very late. All the sounds of barrack-life were hushed. The moon was just up. I rose to my feet and turned to the open window. But there I stopped.

Elsie was kneeling by Charlie Thurkow’s bed. She was leaning over him, and I could see that she was kissing him. And I knew that she did not love him.

I kicked against the chair purposely. Elsie turned and looked towards me with her hand still resting on Charlie Thurkow’s forehead. She beckoned to me to go to them, and I saw at once that he was much weaker. She was stroking his hair gently. She either gave me credit for great discernment, or she did not care what I thought.

I saw that the time had come for me to fulfil my promise to

the brigadier, and went out of the open window to send one of the sentinels for him. As I was speaking to the man I heard the clatter of horse's feet, and a Sikh rode hard into the Palace square. I went towards him, and he, recognising me, handed me a note which he extracted from the folds of his turban. I opened the paper and read it by the light of the moon. My heart gave a leap in my throat. It was from Fitz. News at last from Capoo.

'We have got it under,' he wrote. 'I am coming down to help you. Shall be with you almost as soon as the bearer.'

As I walked back towards the hospital the brigadier came running behind me, and caught me up as I stepped in by the window. I had neither time nor inclination just then to tell him that I had news from Capoo. The Sikh no doubt brought official despatches which would reach their destination in due course. And in the meantime Charlie Thurkow was dying.

We stood round that bed and waited silent, emotionless for the angel. Charlie knew only too well that the end was very near. From time to time he smiled rather wearily at one or the other of us, and once over his face there came that strange look of a higher knowledge which I have often noted, as if he knew something that we did not—something which he had been forbidden to tell us.

While we were standing there the matting of the window was pushed aside, and Fitz came softly into the dimly lighted room. He glanced at me, but attempted no sort of salutation. I saw him exchange a long silent look with Elsie, and then he took his station at the bedside next to Elsie, and opposite to the brigadier, who never looked up.

Charlie Thurkow recognised him, and gave him one of those strangely patronising smiles. Then he turned his sunken eyes towards Elsie. He looked at her with a gaze that became more and more fixed. We stood there for a few minutes—then I spoke.

'He is dead,' I said.

The brigadier raised his eyes and looked across to Fitz. For a second these two men looked down into each other's souls, and I suppose Fitz had his reward. I suppose the brigadier had paid his debt in full. I had been through too many painful scenes to wish to prolong this. So I turned away, and a general move was the result.

Then I saw that Elsie and Fitz had been standing hand in hand all the while.

So wags the world.

CHARACTER NOTE.

THE PEASANT.

‘De tous les appuis le plus sûr est encore la force d’âme.’

ANNA may be seventy years old. She has a face harsh and strong and so wrinkled and furrowed that one cannot tell at all what a girlish Anna may have been like. She has a great ‘gaunt’ bent old figure like a man’s, hands that have done the work of a man for years, and a nature which is celebrated rather for its stern enduring masculine properties than for any feminine softness at all.

Anna is not, it must be confessed, lovely to look at or meek to deal with. She is of Norfolk, and has the cool steady independence which is essentially of eastern England. Anna will look her visitor, be he king or beggar, full in the face and with an unruffled composure which, if one met it in a duchess instead of an ugly old woman who works coarsely for her bread, one would say was the perfection of good breeding. Anna is never surprised, or as she would say herself took aback, under any circumstances. She will turn round from swearing in a gruff voice and deeply at her farmboy, who is also her grandson, to bid the parson ‘Good morning’ with an ease that has a kind of dignity in it, and with the finest unconsciousness of wrong doing. No one indeed has ever attempted to teach Anna her duty—or, at least, has never made such an attempt twice. Once, it is true, the parson’s gentle sister gently essays to point out to Anna that to treat Sunday with a sublime indifference and to work through it as if it were a weekday is morally wrong.

‘Ay,’ says Anna, quite unmoved, and looking her visitor very full and directly in the face, with a lean horny old hand resting on the table. ‘That may be. Like enough. But if I don’t do wrong Polly ’d starve. And I’ll be damned first.’

If Anna had any time for religion, which she has not, she would be a Dissenter. She has no better reasons to give for her predilections for schism than to say with her usual calm directness, ‘That may be all very true. But it’s my way of thinking—same as yours is yours.’ Which seems in a manner to clinch the argument.

Anna’s husband, whom she regarded, and now makes no disguise of having regarded, as a fool, has been dead many years.

Anna's children, with one exception, have left that bleak Norfolk village and gone out into the world. For the exception Anna toils and will toil till the day of her death.

Polly is supposed by the neighbours, whispering among themselves, to be a little daft. They take very good care indeed that their whisper does not reach Anna, of whose steady, keen eyes, gruff old voice, and great, slow anger they are not a little in awe. Polly marries miserably, but on the wedding-day there is a certain dumb sort of triumph in Anna's manner. Men don't marry daft ones. It seems that the wedding should be a sort of proof, not to Anna, who has no self-deceptions, but to Anna's neighbours, that Polly is as sensible as any of them. Eight years afterwards Anna, who has watched over the fortunes of her child like some grim and loving Providence, falls ill, during which illness Polly's husband takes the opportunity of deserting her, and leaves her half-witted and wholly incompetent to meet the world, to fight it alone. Anna gets up from that bed of sickness, cursing herself quite freely for having given way to an indisposition for the first time in her hard life. The neighbours notice a new sternness and resolution about her grey old lips, which have been firm always, and there is a singular keenness and steadiness in her eyes.

From that time forth she devotes her old life and her fierce old energies to Polly and the hapless half-dozen babies with whom Polly has been left. Out of a meagre saving Anna buys a little farm, which she works at seventy years old unaided, unless her grandson of six can be looked on in the light of a help. She takes Polly and the babies to her own cottage and toils for them fiercely and yet contentedly late and early, Sunday and weekday, always. She takes no holidays. She is ignorant of farm work and learns it at threescore years and ten with astonishing patience, thoroughness, and sagacity. She goes out in all weathers. She wears always the same dun-coloured garments, half feminine and half masculine. Her furrowed and shrewd old face is always partially hidden in a great bonnet which may have been white once and is certainly white no longer. She has not a single affectation of manliness—having indeed neither the leisure nor disposition for affectations of any kind—and is yet more than half a man and doing a man's work with perfect simplicity and thoroughness. In quite a little while after she has purchased her farm, the live-stock dealers become aware that they have to deal with an old woman who can drive a bargain better than any of her sons and who can tell the points of

a horse with exceeding shrewdness and accuracy. Anna may be heard swearing at her pigs and chickens in a great, gruff, friendly fashion in the early mornings and at night, or met trudging the eight miles to market, with her old eyes, under the disreputable bonnet, getting even a little brighter and keener than usual over the prospect of sharp business in the future.

She is spoken of everywhere as honest. She has certainly not derived a code of morals from the Church which she doesn't believe in, or from the chapel which she doesn't attend, but has, perhaps, drawn one up unconsciously for herself, and made it uncommonly short, simple, and sincere.

The gentry to whom she regularly sells the farm produce are even a little afraid of a person so direct and uncompromising. Anna, indeed, is the woman of one idea—which is Polly—and has no time or inclination for social amenities at all. The neighbour who joins her when she is driving her pigs into market is not a little rebuffed in her gossip by a person who is entirely intent on the business in hand, and whose answers and dictums are perfectly gruff, shrewd, short, and to the point. It is thought, and said, by the Squire's lady, who attempts to interest Anna in the outside world, that the old woman is invincibly ignorant and narrow. When she is told, with some effusion and a desire to make her realise the importance of the proceeding, of the birth of a prince, her old eyes rest wistfully almost for a moment on the smallest and forlornest of Polly's babies, and she can't be brought to say anything more enthusiastic than that it's to be hoped he'll be brought up godly. She is, in fact, as is said, narrow. Her staunch old life has but one interest, and anything which does not touch that does not touch her. For a feeble Polly at home she works ceaselessly her rheumatic old limbs and her weary old brain. Because of Polly she has no time for the talkings and tea-drinkings which alleviate other old lives, perhaps. For Polly, her business instincts must be ever shrewd and on the alert. Because of Polly she must toil always and rest never—must be, if you will, narrow, concentrated, money-grubbing, and, as it is often said, wholly unfeminine; though that she is unfeminine in the sense in which an idle woman shrieking for her rights on a platform, or an hysterical one blaspheming for them in a novel, is unfeminine, will scarcely be thought. The only right Anna wants is, in fact, to keep Polly. She does the work of a man, because if she did not Polly would starve. She has lived among

men, and become in some sort of them, because she must. Even if it had been in her nature to be tender, clinging, and simple, her circumstances would have denied her the indulgence of those old-fashioned qualities. She has the coarseness of a man because she has done the work of a man, and is infected with his roughness as well as with his strength and purpose.

Yet even Anna—towards Polly and Polly's babies only—has some of the dearer and softer virtues which make a woman. When she goes home in the dusk she will tend Polly's babies, especially the smallest of all, whom she thinks lovely, with her hard old face tender, and her great rough hands gentle.

She encourages this infant—a sad infant, with some of Polly's daftness on its poor little vacant face—to walk, or lift itself up with the assistance of a great finger, and calling it all the time by a number of names and in terms which shock delicate persons, but mean love not the less. Towards Polly herself Anna is always in a coarse fashion gentle, and strongly patient. Though she will allow no one else to suggest to her that Polly's brain power is not so great as it should be, that she accepts the fact is evident, if only by the way in which, worn out with hard work herself at night, she will do Polly's work for her without a word of rebuke. Sometimes in the dusk, when Polly falls stupidly asleep, with her pretty, foolish head on her folded arms on the table, the old woman, rocking Polly's baby to sleep on her shrivelled breast, looks at Polly with eyes full of yearning and pity; wakes her up at last with a great gentleness; helps to put her to bed, smoothing the pretty hair with a sad pride and old rough fingers; and stands for a moment looking at this girl, who has been a burden and sorrow all her life, asleep in the poor bed, a child on either side of her, with shrewd old eyes that are dim with something that is not wholly tenderness or pain or affection, and yet partakes of them all. Anna is up the next morning long before Polly is stirring, and may be heard swearing at the animals and the grandson farmboy, of whom she is infinitely fond, in the first dawn.

One day Anna is taken ill. She says nothing about it. There is no one to say anything to. Polly has herself weakly health as well as a weakly intellect, and has the children to see to as best she can. A doctor is out of the question when one lives as hard as Anna has lived all her life. So she goes to work as usual and as she must. There comes a day when her gruff old voice,

shouting, and, it is to be feared, cursing about the farm, is weaker than usual. There is a sort of mist before her keen old eyes, and she has a feeling creeping into her heart as if nothing mattered very much, and would soon cease to matter at all. She gets a little brandy from the inn. Having been sternly abstemious all her life, it revives her for a while. She puts the farm in careful order. She gives a few instructions to her little grandson, who looks up bewildered into her grey old face. She sits down in the stable at last, with her trembling lips moving in a vague prayer. She has not prayed much hitherto, unless to work is to pray, as some think. 'Polly won't be able to keep up the farm,' she says faintly; 'Polly's too daft.' She prays God to see to that helpless creature and those helpless children when this thing which she feels coming upon her has come.

'It'll be the Union,' she says; 'I could only keep them out of it a little while.' She murmurs over the verse of a hymn—a hymn ending 'Glory, glory,' and entirely inappropriate and unsuitable—which they used to sing at chapel in the far-off days when she had time to go there. After that she knows nothing. The little grandson, finding her presently, runs crying for help, and two labourers lift this poor old dying creature on a board and carry her towards home. She does not know who they are. She has forgotten most things. She has ceased to care for almost everything but one thing, and only gasps to them before she dies not to take her home—dead—to Polly—lest Polly should take on.

A heroine? A martyr to a cause? Why, no. Only a coarse, ugly old creature, who expiates the crime of bringing a daft Polly into the world by working and dying for her. Only that, after all.

A HISTORY OF HANDS.

THIS is not palmistry : this is evolution. I propose (as historians always say) to trace the origin and development of hands from the earliest date to the premiership of Lord Rosebery. Now, a hand is an organ primarily produced by forestine animals to assist them in grasping small stems or branches. That is always the very first chapter in its history. It may afterwards, indeed, be incidentally employed to write In Memoriam or to paint the Transfiguration ; but in its earliest beginnings it was entirely designed to aid its owner in swinging from bough to bough of the trees he inhabited. The rule is absolute : no forest life, no chance of developing that opposable thumb to which all hands owe their attribute of handiness.

In order to appreciate the truth of this profound principle, here first enunciated, we have only to look at the prevalence of something resembling a hand among almost all tree-haunting birds or mammals. It would be a grave mistake to suppose that hands are peculiar to man and his relatives the monkeys. Many other forest-bred creatures of less exalted rank are in possession of highly developed prehensile organs. Very often indeed, as if on purpose to mark this connection between trees and hands, a prehensile thumb and a prehensile tail accompany each other. Take, for example, the common opossum. As every earnest student of plantation songs is well aware, this intelligent beast has a long and almost hairless tail, by which he can hang from the branches of the gum-tree. It is agile and flexible to the highest degree, and greatly assists the opossum who owns it in swinging from branch to branch in his native forests. The young opossums usually crawl on their mother's back, and employ *their* tails to hang on to hers, which she curves as a support for them above her body. But the opossum has also that very human and monkey-like feature, an opposable thumb, which makes his hind foot into a genuine hand, quite capable of grasping the branch of a tree or any similar object. Yet notice now how truly the hand is here intended, like the tail, not for science or art, but for mere locomotive purposes : unlike ourselves, the opossum has hands on his hind legs only, while his fore paws have a much less movable or

opposable thumb, and are far more foot-like. Why should this be so? Simply because it is the way of opossums to hang head downward from the boughs of trees, and to swing themselves from branch to branch by their prehensile tail and their hand-like hind feet, much after the familiar fashion of the spider-monkeys. Hence it is the hinder extremities alone which have been specialised into grasping organs; the fore feet are destitute of a flexible thumb, and are mainly employed in walking on all fours or in clutching at boughs as the animal jumps at them. Odd as it sounds to say so, the arms end in feet, while the legs end in hands, in the eccentric opossum.

The fact is, a hand-like organ has been developed over and over again in very different parts of the animal kingdom by various beasts and birds which sit much on trees and make their living largely off fruits, nuts, and tree-haunting insects. The hands are things to grasp with and hang by. The opossum does not largely use his own pair to feed himself: they are mainly employed in holding on to branches. Indeed, he usually catches on with his hind feet, as he lands after a jump, so that he may be regarded as the extreme opposite of such purely ground-mammals as ourselves and the kangaroos, which walk erect, and use the fore paws as auxiliary members only. The opossum, one might almost say, walks head downwards, so that his tail and hind feet become the analogues of our hands, while his fore feet are employed in walking and climbing only. He feeds with his snout, and never, I think, employs his hands for holding loose objects, like fruits or insects, as do parrots and monkeys.

If anybody doubts the necessary connection between such a forestine life and the possession of hands, he has only to look at that singular group of South American opossums, known to men of science as yapocks (I apologise for such bad words), which have abandoned the ancestral woodland habits of their race, and taken to fishing in rivers like an otter. These water-haunting 'possums have no opposable thumb, but are web-footed like a duck; and their tail, instead of being prehensile, has been modified like a water-rat's, to aid them in swimming. Even among the other opossums, the opposable thumb is most highly developed in the common North American species so largely enshrined in Christy Minstrel melodies, because this is the kind which swings most freely from tree to tree and is most monkey-like in its habits. The smaller rat-like or mouse-like South American opossums,

which burrow in the ground or haunt low brushwood, have paws instead of hands; they never use their tails as prehensile organs, and only manage to run up trees at all by digging their claws into the bark, like squirrels. In short, a hand is only likely to develop where an animal inhabits trees whose branches are near enough in diameter to his own grasping powers to make an opposable thumb a distinct advantage to him.

The opossums belong, like the kangaroos, to that early group of mammals, the marsupials, which carry their young in a pouch during their helpless infancy. But other mammals of higher types show us many premonitory symptoms of the hand-forming tendency, even before we arrive at our own allies and ancestral relations, the quadrumanous monkeys. Among rodents, for example, the squirrels make some faint approach to the possession of hands, though they have not the opposable thumb which forms of course the distinguishing feature of the true hand as it appears in man, the monkeys, and the opossums. Indeed, the squirrel may be looked upon as in two respects the type of the opposite tree-haunting characteristics from those exemplified in the monkeys and the opossums. The latter class are essentially graspers and swingers, while the former may rather be described as acrobats and balancers. In them, the bare prehensile tail is replaced by a very bushy and hairy organ, held erect over the back, and employed by its possessor like the pole of the rope-dancer; while the grasping hand gives place in like manner to sharp claws which dig into the bark of trees and enable their possessor to climb with astonishing agility. But though the squirrel cannot employ one paw alone to grasp an object, it holds a nut or an acorn between its two fore paws in much the same way as we ourselves might hold any large fruit like a melon or a cocoanut. It approaches us in habit also more nearly than do the opossums, inasmuch as it sits erect on its hind legs and uses the fore legs alone as clasping hands or as auxiliary organs with which to feed itself.

An immense number of tree-haunting animals more or less resemble one or other of these two great types in their main characteristics. They belong, one might say, to the monkeys or to squirrels. I am speaking, of course, merely from the point of view of habit and mode of life, not in the least from the point of view of genealogical relationship. The dormouse, for example, which is by race a mouse, is yet by habit essentially a squirrel. It is an adopted woodlander. It has a bushy tail, which it

employs as a balance; and it holds a filbert or acorn in its two fore paws in true squirrel-like fashion. But though it has no prehensile tail, it will hang by its curved hind feet from a swaying twig to reach a nut below, in much the same way as a monkey or an opossum. On the other hand, our little harvest mouse is essentially, so far as habit is concerned, a monkey. True, the grasses are its forest trees; but it climbs them with its prehensile tail and its little clasping claws in the most agile manner. Yet it has no opposable thumb, and so its feet are rather paws than hands; it uses them prettily in the squirrel fashion to feed itself.

Many other tree-haunting animals of very different groups present the same general adaptive features. Thus the tree porcupines have prehensile tails, and feet which are to a great extent half hand-like. The two-toed ant-eaters, which are tree-haunting creatures of a very antique type, have prehensile tails and strange bent claws with which they grasp or rather hook on to the branches. Even the tree kangaroos have most hand-like claws, while the cuscus of the Moluccas, with its grasping tail and curious clinging hind feet, approaches very near to the type of the opossum. In all these cases, we see that similar habits produce similar structures, in spite of the greatest possible ancestral differences. In short, wherever an animal takes to tree-haunting, no matter what its original form may have been, it is sure to develop into one or other of two alternative types, the monkey or the squirrel.

Even among birds, as I have already pointed out in this Magazine, the most arboreal classes, like the parrots and macaws, succeed in developing strangely hand-like organs. Now birds are already heavily handicapped in this matter, for their fore feet have long since been converted into wings for flight, and they have only their two hind legs left them to sit upon. Hence it is obvious that the squirrel type is antecedently impossible for them: they can't hold a nut up to their mouth between their two hands, because if they did they would resemble the cherubs who 'couldn't sit down, for they hadn't *de quoi*:' they would have nothing left to hold on to the tree with: while as for a prehensile tail, that is clearly out of the question. Yet if you look at a parrot you will see for yourself with what marvellous ingenuity it has managed to outwit these primitive disadvantages. It can cling with one foot and balance itself with one leg on a branch or twig, while with the other it holds up between its two opposable thumbs a nut or a fruit, which it nibbles gingerly. Then, though it has no grasping

tail, it makes its curved beak in part supply the deficiency. Altogether, the parrots display as well as any mammal the habitual and triple connection of forestine life with a grasping hand, a high intelligence, and most agile movements.

It is among the great group of the Primates, however, which includes both man and the other monkeys, that the development of the hand reaches its highest point; so much so, indeed, that the Primates as a group might almost be described as the hand-possessing animals. Yet as some vagueness appears to exist in the minds of persons who have not yet acquired the Higher Culture, at Girtton or elsewhere, as to the precise meaning of this biological term, I will venture to explain that it is the modern name for all that vast group of leading mammals most nearly related to ourselves, and comprising not only the apes and monkeys, but also the lemurs, the aye-ayes, and the bats. I am thus precise in my definition because experience shows that ecclesiastical preconceptions may lead to error in the use of the word. Has not Mr. Lefanu recorded the story of the Irishman who saw in a case at the Museum of the College of Surgeons the skeleton of a gibbon just three feet high, under the label 'Primates'? He drew back in surprise. 'Ah,' said he, 'and who'd have thought, now, they'd have made such a little fellow Archbishop of Armagh!'

The Primates of science, as distinguished from those of York and Canterbury, are all the higher mammals (I put it in popular terms) which have skeletons essentially corresponding with the skeleton of man. They are apparently developed from the lower group of insectivores, which includes the hedgehogs, moles, and shrews; and indeed a few of the most advanced insectivores, such as the so-called flying lemur, have been bandied about with shocking levity from one class to another, being placed by some naturalists in the superior group, and then degraded by others again into the inferior order. For the most part, the Primates are arboreal animals—else whence their hands?—though man, with his usual disregard for ancestral convention, has gone back in this as in so many other respects upon his primitive 'hairy quadrumanous progenitor.' 'To improve is to change,' says Emerson; 'to be perfect is to have changed often;' and man (whisper it not in Conservative circles) is man just because he has changed a hundred times oftener than any other animal.

Even the bats (who are our own second cousins, with a fancy for flying) are essentially tree-haunters in origin at least; and the

greater part of them, including the big tropical fruit-bats, still perch on trees, and are vegetarian in diet. But as they early converted their hands for all practical purposes into wings, by letting a membrane grow up between the fingers, they have here very little importance for our present purpose. Nevertheless, their general scientific name of Cheiroptera or wing-handed animals shows that the true nature of the so-called wing as a web-fingered hand was early understood by men of science. The fact seems to be that bats are those of our immediate relations which, when edible fruits began to be developed in quantities, first took to an arboreal existence, but afterwards, owing to the ease with which arboreal animals can jump from limb to limb of trees, converted their hands into a flying organ. First steps in this direction frequently occur among other arboreal mammals, as for example with the flying squirrel, the flying lemur, and the flying opossum, all of which glide easily from branch to branch by means of a parachute-like extension of the skin on either side of the body. But these lower grades of flying mammals can only skim downward from a branch above to another below it. They cannot really rise on the air, which is strictly what we most of all mean by flying. That last improvement is reserved for our own relations, the bats, which emulate birds in the perfection and beauty of their flying mechanism.

A bat's wing is in short a hand, with very long fingers, and with the skin stretched between them so as to form a flying membrane. Of course the exaggerated length of each joint in the fingers shows how very long a time the bat must have taken to develop his hand into so specialised a form; but a hand it still remains in underlying structure, and it still retains a most hand-like peculiarity in the separate thumb, which forms no part of the wing, but is used by the animal in many cases as a hook or bent finger to hang itself up by. A thumb, once acquired, is far too valuable a possession to be readily given up; and the bats have stuck to theirs with creditable persistence, even when the rest of their hand has been practically lost by conversion into an expanded flying organ. One other feature still more strikingly displays the underlying kinship between the bats and ourselves, in spite of long divergence; the female bat has her breasts in the same position as in our own race, which gives her, small as she is, when looked full in the face, a singularly human and almost pathetic aspect.

This, however, is a digression. The bats have beguiled me away from the question of hands into airy regions somewhat alien from my proper subject. Let us return to the other and more central Primates, who have never fallen away from the true quadrumanous tradition. The earliest and simplest of these are the nocturnal lemurs, in which some sort of hand is almost always present. The lemurs, in fact, best represent in our existing world those primitive ancestors of the man-and-monkey group which first took to the habit of arboreal existence. They are somewhat squirrel-like creatures, with bushy tails of the squirrel or balance type; and they have rather rude and clumsy hands, better adapted for just grasping and clinging to a bough than for anything like dainty or delicate manipulation. Indeed, their habit is for the most part merely to walk on all fours along the top of a branch than to swing from bough to bough after the monkey fashion. Hence their hands are hardly more than simple curved and padded paws for treading firmly on a rounded surface. Nevertheless, they are truly quadrumanous, much more so than the opossums; but like the opossums their hind hands are often more hand-like than their fore feet, being provided with a good opposable thumb which enables them to swing from branch to branch with practical safety. In some lemurs, however, the tail is wholly wanting, and in many the fore hands undergo most curious modifications in adaptation to special peculiarities of livelihood. In the aye-aye, for example, that curious little debateable beast which inhabits the dense forests of Madagascar, the hind hands alone have opposable thumbs; the fore feet are more like those of squirrels, but have the middle finger long and slender like a skeleton, for a curious reason connected with its habits of feeding. For the aye-aye lives mainly on grubs, which it extracts from the branches of trees; and in order to discover them, it taps the branch with its paws and listens as a doctor does in sounding with a stethoscope. When it finds a grub, it extracts him from his hole with the long slender middle finger, which is fashioned on purpose like a bent wire for this very object.

Many other bizarre variations on the central type of hand are found in various other forms of lemurs.

It is the ordinary monkeys, however, who have the credit of inventing and developing the hand in the shape in which we know and use it. The most truly arboreal and most active of mammals, they early evolved a style of paw exactly adapted to

their peculiar habits. The lowest of the class are the American monkeys, with very flat noses, and nostrils that open sideways instead of downwards. Among them, the marmosets most closely approach the lemur type, and are therefore the most primitive and least developed members of the entire family. Their tails are still of the squirrel-like pattern, hairy and bushy and mainly employed to balance the body. They are never prehensile. Moreover, the marmosets are still for the most part insectivorous and carnivorous rather than fruit-eating. The hand is hardly more advanced than in the squirrels; the nails are claws, and the thumb can scarcely be separated from the other fingers—it is not truly opposable. Accordingly, since the power of grasping an object all round is the very basis of intelligence, the marmosets and their allies are remarkable for being the least intelligent of monkeys. In nature's school they go to the bottom of the class to which they belong. They are in fact the lowest surviving type of monkey, stranded among an antique fauna in the forests of South America.

The other American monkeys, somewhat higher in grade, consist of two groups—a lower, still with bushy squirrel-like tails, and a higher with prehensile tails of extraordinary flexibility. Among the last-named are the celebrated howlers, who make night hideous on the banks of the Amazon. These howlers have movable thumbs on their hands, but the foot is still more hand-like than what naturalists call the 'anterior extremities.' Nor has any American monkey as good a thumb as the higher and more strictly frugivorous monkeys of the Old World. No American species, in fact, has a hand in which it can hold things between the thumb and forefinger. Even here, though hands are now well on their way to the final development, they are useful mainly for walking and swinging on trees, not for purposes of what we appropriately describe as manipulation. In the howlers and their congeners, it is rather the extraordinarily flexible tail which plays the first part as a prehensile organ. I do not like to indulge in travellers' tales: but I cannot resist mentioning the singular fact that when you shoot a howler it still hangs to the tree by the tail when quite dead, and does not fall for some hours, when the muscles have sufficiently relaxed to let it drop from the branches. Howlers, though superior in intellect to marmosets, are far less clever than Asiatic and African monkeys, and their brains have far fewer and less involved convolutions.

Their relations, the spider-monkeys, carry the same tactics a step or two further. They have very flexible tails and very long arms which they use for swinging from bough to bough in the most agile manner. But the tail being here the most highly specialised organ the thumbs are imperfect and sometimes quite rudimentary.

Both howlers and spider-monkeys are largely fruit-eaters; but the monkeys of the Old World surpass them both in fruit-eating habits and in the high development which the thumb and hand have received by practice. No Asiatic or African monkey has a prehensile tail, and owing to this fact their hands are the most highly developed in nature, with the sole exception of their human congeners. The baboons and other ground monkeys, indeed, run on all fours like dogs, and in many respects their paws are therefore rather foot-like than hand-like. But in the gibbons and other tree-haunting apes of the Old World, we get the full development of the hand with its opposable thumb and its power of grasping an object in true human fashion. All these higher monkeys feed largely on fruit and nuts, which they hold in their hands exactly as a man would do. Vegetarians may note, however, that when a gibbon is fed on a pure fruit diet, it loses its fur, and pines and dwines most wretchedly; but when it is allowed to help itself to insects and other suitable animal food, it recovers tone forthwith, and becomes once more quite brisk and cheerful.

In the higher apes and in man, the hand is thus an inherited organ. It descends to us from tree-haunting and fruit-eating ancestors. The thumb was first acquired for grasping branches, and afterwards gained in delicacy of adjustment when it was employed for picking fruits and holding nuts or other food-stuffs. When the ancestors of man quitted the woods and took to walking on their hind legs in the open, the hands on the legs began to lose their opposable thumbs, and were specialised into feet, with a padded great toe of the existing pattern. At the same time, the true hands, being now no longer employed to walk with, or to grasp the boughs of trees, were specialised into more delicate organs for holding food, for wielding weapons, and for the manufacture and use of industrial implements. But if we had not had our arboreal ancestors, we would never have had the hands at all which they bequeathed us—organs which only originate among tree-haunting creatures. The differentiation into hands and feet has already begun in the highest apes, like the gorilla and chim-

panzee, in which the fore paws are far more prehensile and hand-like, and the hind paws more used in walking and more foot-like in structure; while in lower forms, on the contrary, it is the feet that are more hand-like, and the hands that are more foot-like, if my Irish blood may be permitted so openly to parade itself. Even the gorilla has a better-marked hand and foot than the chimpanzee, and the chimpanzee than the gibbon. The last trace of the original grasping habit in the human hand, it always seems to me, is given when we prefer to walk with a stick, a sort of lingering reminiscence of that earlier stage when hands and feet alike bore their alternate shares in our method of progression.

The whole history of hands is thus the history of a continuous specialisation. First, thumbs and great toes are separated from the other digits in order to form clasping or grasping organs. Then, the fore paws, being nearer to the head, are specially employed for holding fruits or nuts, and feeding the mouth with them. Next, as approaches are made to the erect attitude, the hind paws are developed into feet, with a heel and a great toe, while the fore paws become more distinctively hands, and gain in flexibility and power of modulation. Finally, in civilised man, specialisation takes place between the hands themselves: the right is employed in preference to the left, to hold a weapon, a tool, a pen, a pencil. To sum it up in two apt and expressive words, we have not only manipulation but also dexterity.

A FATAL RESERVATION.

BY R. O. PROWSE,

AUTHOR OF 'THE POISON OF ASPES.'

BOOK III.—*continued.*

CHAPTER XIV.

Fear,

Revenge, and Wrong, bring forth their kind.

It was a morning—a wet, melancholy morning—when Burders Street looked at its worst. The heavy-coloured clouds had not the honesty to rain and have done with it, but were drizzling and mizzling in a fine, penetrating mist, nothing very much to look at, and yet dense enough to wet the poor people pretty effectually before they had gone very far in it.

There had been a heavy fall of rain in the night; the road was muddy; the water stood in little lakes in the worn places of the pavement. Everything was wet. The houses were stained a dark, sodden colour; the 'Sun's' boards lowered sullen and blurred; the dirty doors looked dirtier than ever; the drops were making a monotonous splashing down the area of No. 15, where the girl on the steps was sweeping—presumably the wet from the passage; while occasionally a bedraggled, ragged-skirted woman passed down the street, her shawl drawn close about her head, her hands tucked under her armpits.

Richard Leigh was sitting in his chair by the fire. He had felt chilly all the morning, and Maggie had kept the fire up for him. He held his hands before the little blaze as if he found the warmth it gave very grateful. And very old and broken he looked as he sat bending over the small grate, watching the jet of flame with that intent, meaningless stare of his.

Maggie had been busy since breakfast, in expectation of Gilbert's visit. She was now sitting at the table with a newspaper, some days old, open before her.

Suddenly she started; the colour flushed to her cheek.

'This is very curious. I see here in a list of fashionable people the name of Lady Keyworth. Who can that be?'

'Your cousin's wife, I suppose,' said Leigh, absently.

A pained look came into her face; his faculties this morning seemed to be weaker than usual.

'Why, dear,' she remonstrated gently, 'you know Waveney is not married. But who can this Lady Keyworth be? I have never heard of any one else of the name; and it is spelt just as Waveney spells his. Perhaps she is the wife of some one who has lately been made a baronet or knighted.'

'I don't know, I am sure.'

'I shall ask him when he comes to-day. He will be sure to know who she is.'

'Is your cousin coming here to-day?'

'Yes, I expect him this afternoon. He might, perhaps, have come this morning but for the rain.'

'I am so chilly,' murmured Leigh pitifully. 'It seems to me as cold as winter.'

'Are you, dear? Let me stir the fire for you; there,' she had knelt down on the hearthrug beside him, 'there, that's a better blaze, isn't it?'

'I don't know what has come to me, Maggie; I feel so cold and nervous.'

'It is the rain, I am sure. It looks wretched out of doors,' she said, though the fire, she knew, had made the room uncomfortably warm.

'No, I feel a kind of apprehension coming over me. What is that saying?—coming events throw darkness—throw dark——'

'Coming events cast their shadows before them,' she suggested.

'Yes, that's it. Coming events cast their shadows before them,' he repeated. He drew nearer to the fire. The light of intelligence in his face burned very feebly. 'I feel so nervous,' he murmured.

Her face grew sad as she watched him. 'There are no events coming to us, dear; unless,' she added, 'you call the visit of the new landlord an event.'

'I don't like seeing strangers. If it were not so wet, I think I should go out till dinner-time.'

'No, but it is too wet for that,' she said quickly. 'And really this gentleman is of no consequence. I imagine he merely wishes to see the room.' Careful to keep from him everything that might awaken his apprehension, she had not mentioned the fact of Gilbert's having been so recently at the Court. She had only told him that she had met Mr. Job's new landlord at the 'Sun.' 'Ah,

there's a knock,' she added. 'I expect that is Mr. Gilbert. Come in.'

Mr. Job entered, and informed them that Mr. Gilbert was waiting below.

'Show him up, please, Mr. Job. We are quite ready for him.'

By a little ruse Mr. Gilbert had contrived to free himself from the attendance of the faithful Finch, and had come alone. When he entered the room, Leigh was sitting with his back to the door, in front of the small grate, bending low over the fire; and from this position he did not move.

'I hope,' said Mr. Gilbert in a tone of apology, 'Mr. Finch has explained to you the reason of my visit and you will forgive the intrusion. I have just become the owner of this house, and needs must come and see it, you know. I believe Mr. Finch saw over it not long ago?'

Maggie said that this was so.

'What a wretched morning!' went on Mr. Gilbert pleasantly. 'This mist is more penetrating than rain, and a good deal more depressing. What a change from the other afternoon! It is positively cold to-day. Even Waveney Court would look dreary a morning like this, eh?' he added, in his light friendly way.

Something fell in the grate. There was a sound like the rattling of the fireirons.

'Is there any information I can give you?' Maggie asked hurriedly, anxious for the effect this allusion might have upon her father.

'Thanks, thanks,' said Gilbert. 'A few questions, perhaps, though I am sorry to trouble you. How well your rose has kept! May I smell it?' The rose Gilbert had given her was in a small glass on the chimney-piece. He approached to take it. 'I am so fond——'

A low, piercing cry broke through the room—a sound renewed and prolonged for some seconds, dying away at last into a soft, wailing moan, like the sobbing of a sick child. Richard Leigh, his worn face pallid as the dead's, the sweat bursting out upon his forehead, his whole form shaken and trembling, had fallen forward, burying his face in his hands, moaning piteously. Maggie was on her knees by his side.

'Oh, father, father, what is the matter? What has happened? What can I do for you? Tell me—speak to me. Don't moan like this. Oh, don't, don't, don't—pray don't,' she cried, passing

her arm round him as she tried to draw his head to her bosom. 'Speak to me, father; tell me what to do for you. What is it? Are you ill? Oh, father, speak to me. Indeed——'

Gilbert touched her on the arm. He signed to her to move away.

'I think, perhaps, I can explain to you, if you will come with me a moment,' he whispered, turning away.

Maggie rose to go with him. But before she had moved a step from the hearthrug Leigh had caught her by the arm.

'Stay!' he muttered, in a voice strangely hollow, strangely unlike any sound she had heard from him before. 'Stay! You shall not go near him—you shall not touch him—stay!' he repeated, his voice rising with increasing vehemence.

'I should scarcely have thought meeting an old friend need have put you out like this, Leigh,' smiled Mr. Gilbert.

Maggie started. 'Who is it, father?' she whispered. 'What is he to you? Tell me.'

Leigh took no notice of her. 'Why do you come here?' he asked.

'A slightly inhospitable question, that of your father's, Miss Leigh,' said Gilbert, deprecatingly; adding, as he turned to her father, 'you must have a good memory for faces. I should not have expected you to recognise me at the first glance after—how many years is it? You have been out of Dartmoor about eight, I know; but I forget how many years you were in.' He spoke in a friendly, familiar way, as if his inquiries were the most natural in the world, drawing a chair towards the table as he spoke, and preparing to sit down.

Gilbert's voice, his question, his own fears, his own fierce rage and indignation, had goaded Leigh to madness. He started to his feet, and pushing Maggie from him, rose to his full height, and turned upon Gilbert with a sudden ferocity that made him fall back a step or two nearer the window. Maggie gazed at him in terrified bewilderment. The old lost, vacant look had entirely left him. A light of intense concentration gleamed in his eyes. His frame quivered with the excitement of his passion, as the memory of his innocence and of his ruined life swept over him in a torrent of awful remembrance. The weight of years and the feebleness of his weakened reason had gone from him, and he stood before his enemy, strong with the vigour of manhood, terrible from a mad resentment of his wrongs.

'Swindler, seducer, murderer,' he cried, the words hissing from his lips. 'Doubly murderer, for you would have sent me to death as well as John Knight. How have you the courage—how dare you thrust yourself upon me now? Did they tell you I was an old man? Did you think I should be too weak to hurt you? If they did, they lied, for I am strong enough to kill a better man than you, George Rees, and the sight of you makes me mad.'

Maggie threw herself on him. Gilbert fell back still nearer the window.

'Oh, father!' she cried.

He pushed her from him. 'Let me alone, child. You fool, George Rees; you fool to give yourself to me like this.' Leigh moved a step towards him. 'You fool!—when I have been waiting twenty-five years for this!' He laughed. 'The day I heard you give evidence against me in court I swore that, if we met again, I'd have your life. And I have never changed my mind. Yes—once; I ran from you like a fool and a coward. Seventeen years! For seventeen years I worked out your sentence. And it was hell! Look at my daughter; is this the place for her? Is this the life she should lead? Do you think it is nothing to me that she, too, has had to suffer for your crime? There is no justice either in heaven or upon earth, but, by God, there is revenge. Yes, George Rees, revenge! And by the memory of my dead wife, by the memory of all I have suffered through you, I say defend yourself, George Rees, for no power on earth can come between us now.' He moved forward as he spoke.

Motionless as a figure of marble stood Rees—his face livid, his lips twitching nervously, but his presence of mind unshaken.

'Yes, one power can,' he said distinctly, in a low, harsh voice.

'What power?' cried Leigh, with an oath.

'The law. It decided between us years ago: let it decide between us again. One of its officers is passing on the other side of the street. Stand back, or, by Heaven! I will call him up.'

His hand was on the window as he spoke.

'Cowardly villain! too late! he cannot save you——' and Leigh sprang forward, but Maggie's arms were about him.

Rees threw up the sash. The policeman was well within call. He was not thirty yards from the house.

'Back, Leigh, back, if you value your liberty,' said Rees.

'Back, father, back, for the love of God,' pleaded Maggie, as

she held him in her grasp with a strength born of the greatness of her need.

He strove in vain to throw her from him.

'Which is it to be?' asked Rees. 'Quick, or I shall call him up.' He leaned out of the window as he said it.

Leigh's struggles ceased. There was a moment of intense stillness, in which the echo of the policeman's steps could be distinctly heard. The driving mist came in at the open window. Then a low, stifled cry broke from Leigh, and he fell back to his old position by the fireplace. Maggie released him from her grasp.

Rees drew in his head, and closed the window. The twitching of his lips had changed to a smile. Consciousness of his triumph was written in every line of his face.

'Now I think we understand one another, Leigh,' he said quietly. 'Let us have no more of this violence. It is absurd. Miss Leigh, I am going to be rude to you, I know, but would you mind leaving us for a little while? Now your father is himself again, I wish to have some talk with him.'

'No, no, father,' she said. 'You do not wish me to leave you?'

'Yes, you had better go,' he muttered.

The smile in Rees's face deepened.

'No, father, I can't leave you—alone with this man,' she pleaded.

'Only for a little while,' said Rees persuasively.

Maggie hesitated; she looked irresolutely from one to the other. Rees went to the door and opened it for her.

'You had better go, as he wishes it,' said Leigh.

Still she paused; still Rees stood by the open door; and then, suddenly, she moved away.

'Thank you,' murmured Rees as she passed him. He closed the door after her.

Leigh had sat down in his chair by the fire. The worst violence of his passion had gone from his face, but the light of intelligence that remained was lurid and terrible. The wet stood upon his forehead in cold drops. His fingers played nervously with the arms of the chair. His head was bowed. Rees still smiled at the sight of him. But if Rees had seen the undaunted look in his eyes—the expression of invincible hatred that shone in them—it is doubtful whether the smile would not have passed from his face, whether he would have had the courage to take his

seat alone with him, with only the breadth of the table between them. Leigh was the first to speak.

'How did you find me out, and why have you come here?' he asked.

'How do you know I did find you out? I have bought this house, and have come to see it.'

'I could tell that you were not surprised to see me.'

'Your perception does you credit, Leigh,' said Rees lightly. 'You are right: I did expect to see you. Here are the facts—but first I will open the window; the room's infernally warm.' He went to the window, opened it, and returned to his seat by the table. 'The other afternoon I happened to meet your daughter at Finch's, as I dare say she has told you. Of course we were strangers. In the course of conversation, however, I learned that she knew Waveney Court, and not only that, but that Waveney Court had a very special and peculiar interest for her—an interest there was no mistaking. The other facts I learned from Finch and his wife. They told me that she was living here alone with her father, about whom'—Rees glanced pleasantly at Leigh as he said it—'they felt there was some mystery. I saw, of course, that your daughter was a lady, and I learned too——'

'And now that you have found me, what do you want with me?' Leigh interrupted him.

'I will tell you, Leigh. I will tell you candidly. While you are at large I like to know where you are.'

'Because murder will sometimes out, even after a quarter of a century.'

'Because there is an off-chance in these things, Leigh, and men have come to the gallows before now through ignoring it.'

'Then, by Heaven! you admit that you did it,' cried Leigh, starting to his feet.

'Sit down, Leigh, and let us have no more nonsense. Admit it? Certainly not. The law found you guilty, and would send you back to Dartmoor again to-morrow. All I say is, there is an off-chance in these cases. What I mean I am not going to explain more fully. I tell you I have my own motives for liking to know where you are while you are at liberty. By the way, how is it they never let you out?'

'I lost my remission.'

'Did something violent, I expect. Violence has always been your failing, Leigh. You have always been too impetuous.'

Leigh had resumed his seat. He was quite calm now, but the

strange light burned no less brightly in his eyes. He kept them turned from Rees.

‘Why don’t you tell the police, and have done with it?’ he asked.

‘A very natural question. It was the first that came into my mind when it had occurred to me that I had found you. I have spent the last few days considering it,’ said Rees, with horrible delight in the torture he was inflicting. ‘I will be candid with you. There are several things to be considered: this is one of them. I don’t want to revive old associations. I have changed my name and my whole manner of life since you knew me. But since we understand one another, I don’t mind telling you a little about myself. I believe you discovered one or two facts in my family history for yourself, didn’t you?’

An almost inaudible ‘Yes’ came from Leigh. Rees could not see his face, because it was turned from him, but he noted the nervous clutching of Leigh’s hand on the arm of the chair, and felt that he had his revenge for the scene by the window.

‘Some years ago an uncle of mine died,’ he said, speaking with the same quiet friendliness, ‘and left me a handsome property here in the East End. Some years before that I had made the acquaintance abroad of——’ he paused, and looked doubtfully at Leigh; and, as if he had changed his mind, added, ‘of a certain captain in the army. On my return to England upon my uncle’s death, I fell in with him again and was fortunate enough, owing to what my uncle had done for me, to be of some little service to him and his wife, who were always more or less in difficulty. Well, they were people in good position, were very civil to me in return, and I don’t mind admitting to you, Leigh, that I owe a good deal to them. Your daughter has, perhaps, told you my name?’

‘She may have told me; I don’t remember.’

‘Well, it is Gilbert—not an alias,’ he added, with a smile, ‘but my uncle’s. I took it in accordance with the terms of his will.’

Leigh had turned round for the first time. ‘I want to hear no more,’ he said. ‘I know enough of your cursed history. At the time Knight made your acquaintance you were a swindling bookmaker.’

‘So you always said, Leigh, and I might have prosecuted you for libel. I was no more a bookmaker than you are.’

Gilbert’s self-possession exasperated Leigh. ‘Where’s Jane Knight?’

‘My dear Leigh, how should I know?’

‘She was your motive for killing him. If she had not been compromised with you, she would never have told the lie she did. Have you married her?’

Gilbert’s face changed. ‘You forget the evidence of the servants,’ he said. ‘They saw the knife in your hand.’

‘Yes, but that did not make against my explanation of what had happened. It was Jane Knight’s evidence that convicted me. She said she saw me actually do it. It was a lie. She either did not come into the room in time to see him actually stabbed, but said she did to strengthen your case; or was in time to see it done, and lied to save you. The latter is the more probable. In the confusion of the moment I could not tell when she came.’

Gilbert had risen to his feet.

‘But the servants—they would have known if she had come in with them.’

‘Not necessarily; all was so sudden and confused. But it is no matter; in either case it was her lie that convicted me.’

‘You forget,’ retorted Gilbert, ‘that you had been heard to say that Knight was ruining you and that you would be better without him, and other things like that. There was no motive for my killing him.’

‘The things I said’—Leigh had also risen to his feet—‘were only what every man who had a partner like Knight would say. I have told you your motive. Where is she now?’

Gilbert fell back one pace nearer the window; Leigh moved a pace or two from the table, and nearer to him. ‘Come, no more of this, Leigh. Sit down. I thought we understood——’ He stopped. Leigh had sprung forward and placed himself between him and the window.

‘You thought I was at your mercy,’ cried Leigh, his whole frame trembling with passion. ‘You thought you had done me with your paltry trick. You thought you had escaped me. No, George Rees, no, so help me Heaven!’ With all his strength he threw himself upon Gilbert; his hand sought the man’s throat.

In age there was no great difference between them, for Leigh was old in everything but years; the blood of both was on fire with a passionate brute lust for mastery; but Leigh was the heavier and the stronger man. The restraints of custom and of creed that fetter the worst of our instincts had dropped from him, and the touch of the man who had ruined his life awoke the fiercest passions of his nature. His sufferings and his wrongs

nerved his sinews and tightened them as with the vigour of youth. The sin of Cain was upon him.

For a few moments they writhed and struggled, desperately contesting each advantage; then fell to the ground, Leigh uppermost, his hand pressing his opponent's throat. In an instant he had let go his hold, and had sprung to his feet. In the fall Gilbert's head had struck the sharp iron fender; he was insensible, his face livid, the blood flowing from a wound. Leigh's passion changed with the instantaneous revulsion of feeling that wellnigh always follows murder.

Not a sound escaped him. He stood for some moments motionless, looking at Gilbert's helpless form, a tumult of emotions surging within him, awe-stricken, irresolute; and then down on his knees he fell by his side, raised his white face, and, resting his head on his arm, endeavoured to bind the wound with his handkerchief. But as he bent close to him, he saw that Gilbert still breathed. Again his feelings changed; his hands paused; his hate seemed to rush back upon him in all its fury; for one instant he was tempted to tear away the handkerchief and reopen the wound; and then, with a savage cry, he yielded to the better impulse, and proceeded to bind the wound yet tighter.

The noise of the struggle and the fall had brought Maggie to the room, but Leigh did not see her.

'No, no,' he muttered, with a kind of monstrous exultation, 'I have not killed him. He is not dead—not dead—not dead—not dead,' he repeated, his voice rising at each repetition of the word, until he ended with a cry that was fearfully suggestive of the wish come back to him that he were.

'Tell me what has happened,' implored Maggie, bending over him.

'No, he is not dead,' he cried again. 'Not——' but pausing suddenly, he laid Gilbert's head gently down and rose to his feet. 'Listen to me,' he said, taking Maggie by the arm. 'He is only stunned, and I have bound his wound so that he cannot lose much more blood.' He paused again, and stood holding her still by the arm; after a moment or two he went on, 'Listen to me, Maggie. We must leave this house, if possible, before he comes round. Ask Mr. Job to go and fetch a cab, but tell him of nothing that has happened; then pack up everything you can lay hands on with all the speed you can; I will help you. In the meanwhile I will consider what we are to do with him,' pointing to Gilbert. 'Now ask no questions, but go and send Job for a cab.'

'But Mr. Job is out. He went out just before—before I heard the noise that brought me upstairs.'

Leigh took a turn down the room.

'Can we do nothing more for him?' she asked, bending over Gilbert.

'Mind you don't stain your dress; he is still bleeding a little. Get the blacklead brush and dab the marks on the fender. I will burn those stains on the carpet in a minute. No, we can do nothing more for him. He is badly hurt. How long do you think Job will be?'

'He can't be long. There is no one in the shop. Where are we going, dear?'

'I don't know where we are going—but I see this. We must take him,' pointing to Gilbert, 'to the nearest hospital and leave him there on our way to the station. They will take him in and give him immediate attention.'

'But if they should question you, dear?'

'They have too many accidents to make it likely they will ask me any questions I cannot answer. I don't know how soon they will be able to restore him to consciousness. Perhaps not for hours. However long it is, it will be the length of the start we shall get.'

'And what will you say to Mr. Job?'

'Do we owe any bills?' he asked.

She considered a moment. 'Only one—the baker's. I have it in my pocket.'

'Give it to me. How long does it take to go to the baker's and back?'

'Oh, about five minutes.'

'That will do. When Job comes back, I will go down and tell him that we are going. You paid the week's rent this morning?'

'Yes.'

'Then, when I have given him another week's rent instead of a week's notice, I shall ask him to be good enough to go and fetch a cab for us, and when he comes back with it, I shall ask him to pay this little bill for us before we go. While he is gone, with the cabman's help, we will get Gilbert out and drive off. Tommy is not up yet?'

'No. His leg is not so well this morning.'

'Where does he sleep? At the back of the house?'

'Yes.'

'Then Job will know nothing about Gilbert's accident.'

'But the people will see us carrying him out.'

‘Go and look out of the window. It is wetter than ever. Scarcely one person goes by in five minutes. The street is deserted. Besides, he shall be covered up with wraps.’

Maggie had gone to the window.

‘Yes, there is not a soul in sight,’ she said; adding, however, ‘Ah, here comes Mr. Job.’

‘Very good. I will go down at once. Now set to work and make the most of every second.’ And he left the room as he spoke.

When Waveney called, late in the afternoon, Leigh and his daughter had been gone some hours.

CHAPTER XV.

Why, the town would only laugh at me, the foolish old bachelor, who had married a girl.

IN a first-class carriage of the train that was taking him from London to Waveney, sat, one morning, only a few days after he had left the Court, our friend Mr. Bothamley. He was not smoking; he was not reading the newspaper—the ‘Daily Express,’ with its able leader denouncing him with such humorous vehemence as the modern Cataline and enemy of the State, was tucked into the cushions behind him; literature of no kind was occupying his attention; and he was neither engaged in conversation nor asleep. In short, he was looking out of the window.

But his thoughts had no connection with the landscape. They were political? Certainly not; nobody’s thoughts could have been less so. They were in some way concerned with the welfare of his fellow men? The truth must be told—they were not. The greatest and most disinterested of men are compelled to devote a little time to themselves occasionally. The reader, however, shall be let into his secret. His thoughts were tender and romantic. He was considering for the last time the advisability of the step he was about to take—namely, that of asking Mrs. Fry to be his wife.

Why Mr. Bothamley had not married before; why he should have wished to marry now; why he did not care to marry a young wife, are three very interesting and suggestive considerations. In the first place, marrying late in life was a family trait in the prudent character of the Bothamleys, love having been in their lives peculiarly ‘a thing apart.’ In the next place, Mr. Bothamley felt

that, at the height to which his fortunes had now attained, a wife was indispensable to him—indispensable to the artistic completeness of the edifice, as upon the summits of beautiful spires and domes we place crosses, weathercocks, and the like. A wife would be a great social convenience to him. He did not care to marry a girl, though there were plenty who would have been very glad to marry him, because he was a humorous man, and was consequently sensitive. But a little while before he had heard a lady of his acquaintance remark upon the announcement of the engagement of a man not at all older than himself to the daughter of her friend, looking at him as she said it, 'Ah, the old bird has been brought down at last, has he? Well, he will cut up the richer for the keeping;' and it had made him wince. Besides, his time and affection were devoted with too much consistency to the working classes for him to be able to spare an adequate portion of them for a young wife. As for founding his family, he intended to arrange for Arthur to do that.

But why choose Mrs. Fry? Because she suited him admirably. By marrying her he would be able to laugh at his world—a consideration with a man of his temperament. By marrying her he would destroy the last remnant of Mrs. Nixon's social supremacy in Smeltington by becoming her distant connection. By marrying her he would secure a wife who would answer every social purpose to perfection. We need only add that he had misjudged Mrs. Fry's age by three or four years, and that he saw in her a gentle, inoffensive person—though clearly she possessed considerable energy—with a pleasant face and a refined manner, of good family; a woman who was a little narrow in the matter of religion, perhaps, but who otherwise was likely to make an excellent mistress for Bushby Hill, and a reasonable and unexacting wife. His only fear was lest the sweetness of her disposition might make life with her a trifle dull.

Having arrived at his journey's end, Mr. Bothamley procured a vehicle, and told the driver to take him to the Court.

In her corner of the drawing-room (Nora had failed to dislodge her from that corner) sat Mrs. Fry. Near her was an open window; through it she might have seen the deep summer sky, and, dimly, the nests of the rooks in the tops of the elm trees, and away to the right the tower of Waveney Church, and beyond it the line of little hills with the windmill. But she seldom looked up from her papers, and when she did, her eyes wandered

mechanically to the pretty arrangement of ferns in the grate. The fate of many a little truant was being decided this morning, for Mrs. Fry was 'doing the attendances' with a view to the approaching school treat. The sound of carriage wheels that by-and-by came through the open window fell upon unhearing ears.

Still, at a less busy time, the idea of a declaration from Mr. Bothamley had certainly occurred to her, but at no time the idea of refusing him. How far she was tempted by the splendour of his position it would not be easy to say; undoubtedly as his wife a wider and more glorious field would be afforded for her religious activities, and for new worlds to conquer Alexander was not more anxious than she. We are inclined to think she had been won just a little by the grace of our great friend's manner and person. But Mrs. Fry would have accepted a much less tempting offer to escape from Nora, whom she had every reason to detest.

So that when Edwards entered the room and unexpectedly announced the member for Smeltington, a little flush of heightened expectation did colour the good lady's cheek, and her eyes did brighten, and the throb of her heart grew almost audible as she came forward to receive him. For the moment he thought her really pretty.

No, upon the scene that followed the reader will not be permitted to look. Mr. Bothamley put his question in a delicate and gentlemanly way, in language warm enough to be gratifying to the feelings of the lady and adequately to express the strength of his attachment, but not so passionate as to be humorous; and again he thought how pretty she looked when, with womanly modesty mingled with a certain confidence becoming her years, she said her irrevocable Yes. And this is all the reader will be allowed to know. There was no one but Mrs. Fry at the Court, and it was settled that Mr. Bothamley should stay to luncheon and go on to Smeltington by an evening train.

The last occasion, upon which Mrs. Fry had been in danger of seeing herself in the peculiarly unfavourable light in which Mr. Edwards's prejudice saw her, had been that on which she had suggested his discontinuing the use of a certain summer-house after dinner for his hour or so of slumberous meditation. The suggestion, naturally, had nettled him at the time, having been palpably only one of those little shafts which Mrs. Fry launched from time to time for his annoyance. Still, for nearly a week, the practice had been discontinued, and he had courted the kindly

offices of the Sleep God in his own pantry. But however willing that deity may have been to oblige him, his attempts to seal the eyelids of Mr. Edwards had been made deplorably ineffectual by the flies. In the course of the week he had not—quite literally—enjoyed forty winks. So that at the end of that time he had quietly resumed his old habit, and had since gone to the summer-house for his doze regularly every day after the servants' hall dinner.

The arbour itself was a picturesque little retreat, one story high, with windows that blinked sleepily through the cool green ivy that fringed them half over like drowsy lids. A pleasanter place to doze in Waveney Court scarcely afforded, and why it had so long been left as a mere winter palace for ribston pippins and storehouse for gardeners' tools, it would very much have puzzled any one to say. It held two rooms, identical in size and shape. It was one of the windows in the upper story that held the stained glass which, in a Philistine mood, Waveney's grandfather had banished from the dining-room.

The summer-house lay deep in the shrubbery on the confines of the kitchen garden, by way of which Edwards generally reached it, following a path that wound through gooseberry and currant bushes from the stables and the back of the house. The path that ended just before Waveney's study also led past it.

Hither, as was his wont, Edwards came in the afternoon of the day of Mr. Bothamley's visit; and, as usual, he mounted to the upper story. Having arranged his Windsor armchair in a convenient position by the table, he sat down. His next care was his pipe—no cumbersome churchwarden that slumber might scatter, but an old sweet briar-root, shining and seasoned, indifferent to falls. Deliberately he filled the pipe; tardily lighted it. Then, having wiped and adjusted his glasses, he opened his paper and began to read.

A deep, sultry stillness rested on the air. It was the hour of nature's siesta. Not a sound came through the opened window—except, perhaps, the murmur from the insects in the flowers below, and the dreamy cawing of the rooks about the distant trees in the avenue. Nature seemed to have set them to caw the rest of the world to sleep. When from time to time old Edwards coughed, the noise sounded harsh and profane. A cat stole into the room, and its noiseless tread was in harmony with the general hush. The intermittent buzzing of a bluebottle was the one discordant sound; but that sensibly deepened the stillness.

Edwards obeyed the promptings of nature and the hour. The paper waved in his hand ; his head fell back ; his mouth opened, his pipe slipping down to his lap ; his breathing grew deep—grew even sonorous ; he roused for an instant, and then relapsed for good into peaceful slumber. *Datur hora quieti.* The cat curled itself up in a shaded sunbeam that fell through the old stained glass ; the bluebottle passed out into the still air, lingered for a moment in the ivy, and then its buzzing died in the distance.

Presently Edwards dreamed. Mr. Bothamley was discussing with Mrs. Hope the merits of a certain sherry, and he, Edwards, was endeavouring ineffectually to get a place in the argument, being kept out of it by his inability to discover which sherry they were discussing. By-and-by Mrs. Hope was metamorphosed into Mrs. Fry, and then—he started ! Was he dreaming, or did he really hear a voice ? He roused still further, and listened. His dream must have come to him through the gate of horn, for he certainly did hear a voice in the room below him. This was what it was saying :

‘It may, perhaps, savour of precipitancy, if I venture so soon to touch upon the question of when—of when so much happiness is to be assured me ; though in such a matter as this—when allowance is made for the natural weakness of the affections—one may be forgiven some degree of impatience, I fancy.’

The door stood ajar ; Edwards caught every syllable distinctly.

‘You would like it to take place this year—in the autumn, perhaps ?’ was the yielding answer.

‘Certainly not later than October or November. If I were to put it, “October or November ?” I feel sure the delicacy of your feelings would lead you to say, “November.” So may I put it like this : Have you any objection to October ?’

A little laugh, a murmured ‘No,’ and then a crisp, sibilant detonation, soft and seductive, sounding in Edwards’s ear fearfully and convincingly like a kiss, broke the drowsy stillness.

Edwards’s face was a picture ! The perspiration beaded his forehead. Every emotion in the whole range of human suffering in turn contorted his features. Horror at his position was probably the most dreadful and the predominant. It was terrible. He durst not move, he durst not close the door, he durst not go ; he durst not cough to let them know his propinquity—because he had heard too much. The only course open to him was to keep as still as death. At any moment they might come upstairs to see the window. At best, he was doomed to violate every feeling

of modesty and duty in his nature by filling the detestable rôle of the eavesdropper. 'If she must have a lover, what does she want to bring him here for?' he thought in his agony.

In his confusion he lost several exchanges of the dialogue. When he heard comprehendingly again, Mrs. Fry was saying:

'Your nephew lives with you, I believe?'

'Smeltington has been his home hitherto. It will not remain so much longer, I think.'

'You expect he will marry?'

'I have every hope of it.'

'You will miss him very much, I should fancy.'

'I should have missed him very much,' was the tactful reply. 'Your nephew and he are great friends.'

'Yes; what a difference there is in young men, Mr. Both——'

'Benjamin,' corrected the great man fondly. 'Benjamin,' he repeated wheedlingly. 'Please call me Benjamin.'

There was a brief, mysterious pause.

'It was a great misfortune for dear Waveney to lose his mother so young,' Mrs. Fry went on. 'He was only eleven when she died. It was her hope, poor thing, that I should take her place; but affection is not enough for that. My poor brother George naturally made much of the boy, and liked to have him a great deal with him. But his influence was not quite all one could have wished.'

'Indeed!' was the grave, sympathetic rejoinder.

'A more charming person in many ways than my poor brother you seldom meet. He was one of those affable, indifferent men who are always popular. But he was weak—fatally weak—and sadly injudicious as far as dear Waveney was concerned, who was a boy who needed *most* careful management. I think so much in dear Waveney is attributable to this, and feel, for that reason, that one should be very tolerant. It was such a comfort to me when he married.'

'Yes?' Mr. Bothamley's tone, however, sounded the least bit bored.

'Yes. It was my dear brother's wish that I should continue to reside here for Waveney's sake; for I think he came to see at last that he had not always been quite judicious. Such a wish as that was, of course, most binding.'

'It would be to you, I feel sure.'

Edwards was choking. He had wholly forgotten the peril of his position. The fear of discovery had vanished. A great

astonishment, a suffocating indignation, had taken possession of him. He breathed with difficulty.

‘Yes, it has been very trying for me,’ he heard Mrs. Fry say, in that sweet, patient voice of hers, a moment or two later. ‘One of the many ways in which dear George’s weakness showed itself was in his treatment of some of our old servants. The butler and housekeeper have been in the family an immense number of years, and are naturally privileged persons. But dear George showed no discretion. He let them take advantage of his kindness, and that is always such a mistake. Now they have become extremely difficult to manage. Edwards, the butler—you saw him to-day at lunch—is quite *passé*, and as obstinate and—what was that?’

‘It sounded like a noise above our heads. Ah, there is the probable explanation,’ said Mr. Bothamley, pointing to the cat that was tumbling precipitately down the stairs. Mrs. Fry was satisfied.

What had happened was this: Edwards’s feelings had for one moment got the better of him, and he had sprung to his feet, treading, in so doing, upon the tail of the slumbering cat. Presently, however, he resumed his seat, and might in time have recovered some degree of composure but for these words from Mr. Bothamley:

‘I think I have heard that there is an interesting window in this summer-house. Is it in the room above?’

Edwards turned icily cold. All power went from his limbs. He felt as if he were frozen to the chair. At the same time his mind became a pitiful blank.

‘I dare say you are a connoisseur of old stained glass?’

‘No, no; I know very little about it. But I certainly take an interest. I am too much the disciple of progress to be able to say with the man in the play, “I love everything that’s old,” but I can go with him as far as “old friends, old books, old wine, and, I believe——” I forget what the other thing is. Shall we go upstairs?’

‘Oh, certainly, if you wish it,’ assented Mrs. Fry, who did not know her Goldsmith well enough to feel the discreet omission. She went first up the narrow stairs, and Mr. Bothamley followed her.

As it was impossible for Edwards either to jump out of the window or to hide, to feign sleep would probably have been the wisest course he could have adopted. Alas! power to do anything had left him. He had caught every word that had been said; he now heard their footsteps on the stairs; he knew that in another

couple of seconds Mrs. Fry would have entered the room ; and a genial warmth suffused itself over him, and a smile rippled to his lips. He was lost. When Mrs. Fry opened the door, he actually nodded to her.

That gentlewoman's feelings, when her eyes rested on the picture in the chair, no words could describe. We rather think her first impulse was simply to 'go for' him ; at all events, it looked like it. One glance at his face was more than enough to tell her that he had heard every word.

'How dare you ? How dare you ?' she exclaimed, with passionate incoherence. 'What right have you here ? I told you never to come again.'

This outburst broke the spell. Edwards recovered his self-possession in an instant.

'Which, begging your pardon, I had a right——'

'Listening——'

'Which I was so situated as I couldn't help. I should have come down at first, only I thought it was best for your feelings as I should stay where I was. I haven't gained much by listening, as you call it, for such a pack of lies I never heard.'

'Edwards !'

'Yes, mum, I know what I'm saying. I have kep my place a good many years, but I am going to speak now. The things as you have been telling this gentleman, or rather giving of him to understand—for you ain't got the honesty to say 'em—is more than I can bear, and it's right as he should know that there isn't not a word of truth in 'em. A better gentleman than Sir Waveney doesn't live, as, if you're a friend of his, sir, you must know. He's a good gentleman, and he's been a good nephew to you, mum, letting you live on here when, if he'd consulted his own peace and happiness, he'd have—have acted very different, he would. But he had too much respect for his father's wishes, which was that he should let you have a home here, as long as you cared to stay—which is a very different thing to what you was telling this gentleman. I wonder you dare—I wonder you dare speak of Sir George as you have, calling of him names too with your "weak" and your "injudicious." Where'd you get a better brother than he was ? Nowhere ; he was a pattern, a model, he was. And the kindest master and father as ever lived. Not many men would have let themselves be put on as he did. I say nothin' about your remarks of me and Mrs. Hope. I dare say I am passey, and I don't know as it is to be wondered at after thirty years. But you

shan't be troubled with my obstinacy again, mum, for I shall give Sir Waveney notice as soon as he comes home; Mrs. Hope may do as she pleases. I am very sorry as you should have been troubled with it so long. Yes, I'm going now. These are things as have been on my mind a good many years, and it's a wonder they haven't come out before. But I'm going now. I beg your pardon, sir, for having spoke as I have done before you, but I doubt if you know what you're doing, and perhaps this 'll tell you.'

And thereupon Edwards turned, and, forgetting his newspaper and pipe, walked straight from the room.

What followed it is needless to relate. Mrs. Fry was in tears, and Mr. Bothamley did his best to console her. He treated the whole thing as a joke. At first she was very bitter, but under his attentions gradually became resigned. The afternoon, of course, was spoilt. Mrs. Fry's spirit, for the time, was crushed by the intensity of the humiliation.

Mr. Bothamley did *not* resolve to break off the engagement; but, as he reviewed the events of the day on his homeward journey, it occurred to him that life with Mrs. Fry might not be very dull, after all.

CHAPTER XVI.

No man, at one time, can be wise and love.

UPON Waveney's return to the Court a day or two later (Nora was staying with some friends at Cowes), Edwards kept his threat and gave warning.

His story of the encounter in the summer-house afforded considerable amusement to Waveney, who would have been slow to accept the warning but for the old fellow's insistence. Edwards, however, not only had a strait sense of his duty, but felt besides that, after so vigorous an assertion of independence, further submission to Mrs. Fry would be inconsistent with his self-respect. And Waveney, who had not forgotten Nora's wishes in the matter, yielded and accepted the warning, determining at the same time to see that the old man was handsomely provided for.

The news of his aunt's engagement was a great relief to Waveney. At no time had Mrs. Fry's presence been less conducive to the comfort of life at the Court than since his marriage. In Nora Mrs. Fry had met her equal; from the hour of their introduction they had been subtle and implacable foes.

Mrs. Fry's victims had for the most part been men—Sir George, Waveney, Mr. Fry. For the kind of suffering she inflicted there was no better subject than a good-natured elderly man, as there was no worse than a clever, sceptical, unscrupulous young woman like Nora. But this state of things had been trying for Waveney, for with so much fighting going on about him, it was inevitable that he should come in for a good many miscellaneous missiles. Besides, the perpetual clash of arms grows monotonous.

It was upon some such matters as these that he was reflecting over a solitary dessert after a very silent dinner with his aunt, when the dining-room door opened, and, to his astonishment, Edwards announced—

‘Mr. Bendham.’

Expressions of pleasure and surprise followed from Waveney, and of apology from Arthur. Edwards was desired to bring back certain portions of the dinner, and to request Mrs. Hope to see that a room was duly made ready. But it was not until Arthur had finished his meal that the object of his unexpected visit was touched upon. Then, having lighted a cigarette, after a little premonitory pause, he said:

‘I am in the worst trouble I have ever been in.’

‘Then, my dear fellow, for goodness sake fill up your glass,’ said Waveney.

Arthur accepted the decanter. ‘The truth is this: I have done it at last. But I suppose I had better give you the whole story.’

‘By all means.’

‘Well, you know, for some time now—for nearly two years, I should think—I have been on the point of—of proposing to your sister-in-law, May. Well, yesterday afternoon I did it.’

‘My dear old fellow, I congratulate you—from the bottom of my heart I congratulate you. There is no need to ask whether you were accepted. Everybody has been wondering why you have been such an unconscionable time about it.’

‘No, I say, you don’t mean that,’ stammered Arthur. ‘I had no idea anybody—’

‘Anybody? Everybody, I tell you. You have been the subject of unceasing speculation.’

‘Wait a moment,’ said Arthur. ‘You don’t know why I have not—not asked her before. I have had a pretty strong reason. It is my confounded position, my dependence upon that—’

Waveney’s face changed. ‘Ah, to be sure,’ he said seriously. ‘I forgot that for the moment. But it is all right now?’

'Goodness knows! I wish it were,' groaned Arthur. 'What on earth am I to do? I have spoken to my uncle, and he says—"Not another shilling if you marry her."'

'But he doesn't mean it?'

'Mean it! I thought you knew my uncle by this time.'

Waveney shrugged his shoulders.

'I have been a fool—worse than a fool. I have been a villain to act as I have. She is the dearest creature in the world, and I have been a brute to let her suppose I cared for her. I have known I could never marry her. He told me years ago that I should never have her. And I have tried to forget her, and to make her forget me; for I have always known she liked me, and that was really the worst part of it. What was I to do? How could I be with her, and think she cared for me, and——'

'Of course,' said Waveney. 'I believe she would have broken her heart without you. Let us consider the matter as it stands. The question resolves itself to this: How are you to marry her in spite of your uncle?'

'I haven't a penny in the world,' was Arthur's melancholy admission.

'Have you seen Mrs. Nixon?'—and Waveney smiled as he asked it.

'Yes; I have explained my position to her. She will give her consent if I get my uncle's. You see, the thing is this—he wants me to marry Lady Alexandrina Millrind. If I do, of course I shall be his heir.'

There was a moment's pause.

'Lady Alexandrina Millrind! She is no temptation?'

Arthur laughed.

'She is a handsome girl all the same. And you are prepared to marry dear little penniless May, and chance it? It is a bold venture, after the life you have led.'

Arthur was silent for a moment or two. 'I have thought about it, and I believe I am prepared to make any sacrifice. You know I have never cared for knocking about town. It is not my line. I would give anything to have a profession to work at. I have always said so.'

'Yes, I know you have. I can answer for May. Well then, the question is: what can you do? The Church is the profession you would have chosen, isn't it?'

'Yes; but it is too late for that now.'

'Why?'

‘Well, a man who has been knocking about town isn’t exactly the sort of person you would expect to turn parson.’

‘I see no reason why he should not. What does knocking about town mean in your case? Knowing some decent people, belonging to a club or two, and wearing a coat that fits. I see nothing in this to prevent a man from going into the Church. It is the usual thing to go straight into the Church after knocking about at Oxford or Cambridge. Where’s the difference?’

Arthur said nothing.

‘No, depend upon it, knocking about has very little to do with it. The question is, what sort of man is the fellow who has done the knocking about? . . . Well, let me see, you have got your degree. You took honours at Oxford——’

‘A couple of able Thirds!’

‘——and will have no difficulty in passing the exams. Buckle to, and it won’t be long before you are in your first curacy. Then . . .’ Waveney reflected. ‘Waveney is in my gift, you know, and the rector is an oldish man. You would probably not have very long to wait. . . . Nonsense! Pooh! don’t talk about that. You would be the very man for us. I will give you the particulars in the morning. . . . Now, come out and get some fresh air, will you?’

‘You would have made a good man of business,’ laughed Arthur, as he followed him. ‘My word! you have made my heart lighter.’

As they crossed the hall, Waveney added in conclusion, ‘I have more than one string to my bow. I have the gift of another living about five miles off.’ At that moment a servant handed him a letter. With a few words of apology, he turned back to the dining-room and shut the door.

The letter was in Maggie’s handwriting. Addressed by her to Gifford Street, it had been forwarded to the Court from there. It ran as follows:—

‘My dear Waveney,—At last I sit down to write to you. I have not time even now to tell you all I have gone through since we left London; but at all events I can relieve the anxiety which I am afraid you must have felt if you called at Burders Street as you intended, by assuring you that we are in safety.

‘How I have wondered what your feelings were when you came to Burders Street (as I have no doubt you did) and found that we were gone! What did you think had spirited us away? Did dear old Mr. Job tell you of Mr. Gilbert’s visit? If so, perhaps you

guessed the truth—that he was the cause of our flight. Though I don't quite see why you should, for if you had known who Mr. Gilbert was, you would naturally have told me about him.

‘Well, dear, to begin at the beginning, our story is this.’ [Here followed a narration of the events with which the reader is already acquainted, including an account, which her father had given her, of how Gilbert had met with his injury. The letter was continued thus:] When we had left him at the hospital, we drove to Liverpool Street station, where a porter took our luggage to the cloak-room, and brought us a ticket. A few minutes after, father gave the ticket to another porter, and he got the things out of the cloak-room for us, and put them on a cab, and we drove to —. I must tell you that I had nothing to do with these arrangements. Father was managing it all with that terrible clear-headedness that made me tremble (alas! with only too much reason, as it has proved) for what might follow. He had not decided where we were to go, but wished to make it as difficult as possible for them to trace us, and to get out of London as soon as he could. He said that as long as we went to a large town, one was as good as another, and that time was the all-important consideration. It was fear lest we should not have time to cross the Channel that prevented us from making for the Continent. So when we got to —, and the luggage was being taken from the cab, he left me with it, and went into the station as if to look for some one who was to meet us. He really went to inquire what places the next train passed through, and found that the first large town it stopped at was Smeltington. [A cry broke from Waveney.] To Smeltington accordingly we travelled—separately; and arrived here, left our luggage separately at the cloak-room, and did not meet till we were well away from the station. Our first care was to look for lodgings. Father was afraid to go to an hotel. The station stands in rather a new part of the town (so the landlady says, for I have hardly been out), where they are building a number of new streets of, at present, comparatively clean little houses. Well, we have taken refuge in one of these (you will see our address above; we are close to the station), and up to the present time I have seen nothing to make me suppose that we are in any danger of discovery. Perhaps that wretched man is still insensible, or he may even be—no, it would be terrible to think that he had met his end at father's hand, even though it were half accident, and in spite of the awful wrong to father of which I believe

he has been guilty. But altogether it has been an aging experience, dear. May you never know what it is to be as afraid of a policeman as I am!

Now I must tell you the saddest part of all. It is so very sad that I can hardly bring myself to write it. Waveney dear, I am afraid my poor father has quite lost his memory. He knows me, and that is all; at least, I think he knows me, for there are times when I cannot be sure. I have been obliged to have a doctor to see him. He declined to give a definite opinion, but his manner deepened my worst fears. You see, it is only what the German doctor said would probably happen if he received another shock. But it is a terrible trial to me, dear. It would be such a comfort to me if you could come to Smeltington before very long. It is not far from Waveney (the thought gives me a curious feeling), though I dare say it is a tiresome cross-country journey. But I should be so glad to see you, if it were only for an hour or two, it is so difficult to know what to do next. . . .

Here the letter came to an abrupt termination.

Before they separated for the night, Waveney said to Arthur :
'You must return to Smeltington to-morrow?'

'Yes; we have some people coming to stay with us.'

'Any one of importance, may I ask?'

'No one of the least. But I have to look after them.'

'Well,' Waveney began, 'to tell you the truth, I find it rather slow here just now, and one good turn, they say——'

Arthur stopped him. 'Capital!' he said. 'We shall be delighted, and——'

'Perhaps I could say a word to the uncle, eh?'

Arthur laughed; and a few minutes later, they bade one another good night.

BOOK IV.

THE NARRATIVE IS CONTINUED BY MISS LEIGH.

I.

To think that we have been in Smeltington more than half a year! That summer and autumn have both passed away, and that now winter is opening into spring! I have always loved the spring; but I feel I have never watched the lengthening days with so much thankfulness as I watch them now. I manage to do without the lamp until after tea, for that seems somehow like

giving the winter its death-blow. I remember that as children we used to think it was summer when we first had tea by daylight, and could never understand why it was not until so long after that they let us lie upon the grass. When I had my last walk with Waveney, I saw that the hedges were spangled with little specks of green.

We are not in the lodgings we took when we first came here. We were only in them a few days; Waveney, after his first visit, found these for us in the next road, and here we have remained ever since. We have two sitting-rooms and two bed-rooms, and the landlady and her daughter are nice people and make us comfortable. I have no work to do, nowadays, beyond my household duties, which are limited, and attending to my father, for Waveney has been very good to us. The dear old fellow insists upon it.

Alas! the months that have gone by have done nothing to restore my poor father's memory. It seems to be quite, quite gone. He just knows me, and that is all. I fancy he knows Waveney, too, but of that I cannot be sure. The sight of Waveney certainly brings him some kind of associations, for while he is in the room, my father never ceases to watch him, and he has that puzzled, baffled look in his face which makes my heart ache so—a look as if he were groping in some dark corner of his brain for a recollection he feels to be there, but can never find.

There is something very mysterious—mysterious as it is terrible—about this disease. It is so capricious in its development that the doctors seem to know nothing, or next to nothing, about it. It was very wonderful that, after having been mentally helpless for so long a time, he should regain the full and vivid use of his faculties in a few moments, as he regained it during that interview with Gilbert. I sometimes think that perhaps some great excitement might even now restore his powers—temporarily, at least.

When I told the doctor, who is now attending my father, of the sudden and mysterious (as it seems to me) recovery of his faculties that preceded his present prostration, he expressed some surprise. He said that when the memory is temporarily lost, it is commonly restored as suddenly as it disappeared; but when the course of the disease is progressive, if the memory is recovered at all, which rarely happens, the recovery is generally gradual. He gave it as his opinion that another shock, if indeed my poor father is capable of receiving one, would probably prove fatal.

When I said that his memory was quite gone, I was not, perhaps, perfectly accurate. His actions are purely automatic. He has almost entirely lost the power of speech. He appears not to be conscious of anything I do for him, nor of anything that goes on about him. And yet from the strange things to which he occasionally gives utterance, I cannot help thinking that he still retains some vague recollections of the past, and, curious as it may appear, I believe they are in some way associated with Waveney. He startled me a little time ago by suddenly exclaiming, apropos of nothing so far as I could tell, 'Waveney is coming to-day; he is going to bring us his wife.' Waveney was not coming that day, and I tried to explain to him that Waveney was not married; but he seemed not to understand me. The sight of Waveney appears to make him restless; though when Waveney speaks to him he never answers, nor does he show in any way that he understands what he says. Why his poor wandering thoughts should turn especially on my cousin is altogether a mystery to me.

Waveney has been anxious that we should leave Smeltington. It is a detestable place, and I should be thankful to leave it; but the doctor will not give his consent. He tells us that absolute quiet is essential to my father, and will not allow him to undergo the fatigue and excitement of a journey. But it will be impossible for us to stay here very much longer, for Waveney thinks that Mr. and Mrs. Bothamley are not likely to remain in London, where they have been living since their return from their honeymoon, for longer than another month; and I must not run the risk of meeting Aunt Maria. Mr. Bothamley is an oppressively important person in Smeltington, and it is odd to know that one has the honour of being his niece. He is immensely rich, and has the finest house on Bushby Hill. But poor Aunt Maria! Waveney believes she has found her match.

This is not a poor part of Smeltington. Our road is positively fashionable—at least so it would have seemed to me a year ago. A retired baker and his wife are our next-door neighbours, and a few doors off lives a commissioner who is employed at one of the largest shops in the town. He is a very fine old man, and, when he has all his medals on, looks like an elderly general. Still, though this is not really the poor part of Smeltington, ours is the best road in the neighbourhood. We have bow windows, and small patches of garden between us and the roadway; but in the other roads there are not many houses which possess both these

distinctions. In one way and another I have come to know two or three of the poorer people of the neighbourhood. One of my friends is a poor girl whose story, unhappily, is as common as it is sad. A few weeks ago she tried to end her misery in a canal not far from here, but was rescued after she had thrown herself in. One cannot say one sympathises with such an act as that, and yet, when one thinks of her utter want of a future, of the irreparable stain upon her life, one is not surprised that she should wish to end it. I have had a strange feeling about the canal ever since I have known this poor child (she is only a girl of seventeen!). Its still, black water seems to have gained a kind of weird fascination over me. I found at one time that my walks nearly always brought me to its banks, and yet I could never look at it without shuddering. I have resolved now not to go near it; but still I cannot get it thoroughly out of my thoughts, and if I lie awake at night, the picture of it, so silent and black and cruel in the starlight, will keep coming back to me, and it always seems as if it were *waiting*. I don't quite know what I mean, but that is the feeling it gives me—as if it were *waiting*. It is a horrid thought, and I am angry with myself for having allowed it to gain this hold upon me. But hard as I try to keep it from my mind, it will constantly return, and it is always that same feeling—as if it were waiting. It is very tiresome, for the walks by the canal are amongst the prettiest in the country round Smeltington.

Waveney is very good in lending me books. His visits make the red-letter days in my life. They have opened a new line which shortens the journey for him, so that he can have a long day in Smeltington and return to the Court in the evening. The nearness of our house to the station is a great convenience. There are plenty of trains, and he and I often go a station or two out into the country. It would be impossible for me to describe the comfort it is to feel that I have him to go to. The loneliness of those long years aged me. But he, too, poor old fellow, appears to have some shadow on his life. I don't know what it is; he will not take me into his confidence. I wish he would! I have several times thought he was on the point of telling me, but he always changes his mind at the last moment, as if he determined, after all, to keep his trouble to himself. I fancy sometimes it must be the want of achievement in his life which troubles him. In spite of occasional restlessness and indecision, he was very ambitious as a boy.

(To be continued.)

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